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The  
Catherwood  
Mystery

BY

Albert P. Southwick

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THE  
CATHERWOOD MYSTERY

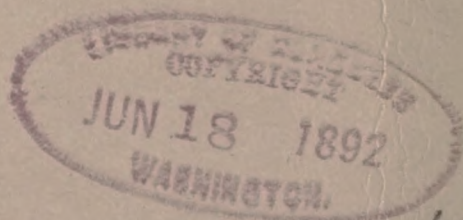
A Novel

BY  
ALBERT P. SOUTHWICK

AUTHOR OF

"BIJOU," "BROWN, THE LAWYER," ETC.

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# THE CATHERWOOD MYSTERY.

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## *BOOK I.—IN-DOORS.*

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### CHAPTER I.

#### AT FULL TIDE.

THE following startling paragraph appeared, as special news, under an appropriately large heading, with subdivisions of sensational import, italicized in glaring capitals, in the local columns of the New York —, on Tuesday, June 17, 1873:

#### "A MYSTERIOUS TRAGEDY.

"MR. JABEZ CATHERWOOD, a gentleman who has lately returned from Ridge's Gulch, California, was found murdered in his room at the fashionable boarding-house of Mrs. Pentricks, on East Ninth Street, about 10:30 this morning. Mr. Catherwood, who was formerly a resident of this city, and is a native of this State, had lately disposed of his financial interests in the West, and is supposed to have had a large sum of money with costly valuables in his possession. There was no evidence of robbery, however, only some torn, unmarked manilla envelopes, which had probably been thrown aside by the deceased, littering the floor. The dead man had been



stabbed in the breast, and the knife, sunk to the haft in the body, caused the corpse to present a ghastly sight as it lay stretched upon a lounge where it had evidently fallen in the death struggle. Little confusion, otherwise, was observable in the room. Coroner Jones held an inquest at noon. A hearing will take place before Justice Marvel at 4 o'clock this afternoon; but, as yet, there is no trace of the murderer. Though the police authorities are very reticent regarding the case, we expect to be able to present some important announcements in to-morrow's issue."

But the next day's sheet, and the columns of its morning's contemporaries, gave but little additional information to the eager readers who perused the course of this thrilling sensation in the damp papers they held by one hand as they sipped their breakfast coffee, anticipating revelations that never came. It appeared that bonds and other securities were found securely packed in a well-worn valise, the key of which was in the vest-pocket of the deceased, and upon his person were several pieces of jewelry and a small amount of ready money. There were no evidences that the murderer had been successful in obtaining any booty, even if the attempt had been made. The police believed that revenge was the motive. A peddler and some half-a-dozen gentlemen (at least, two or three were known to be such), with one lady, had been admitted to his room during the afternoon and evening of the day when it was supposed the crime was committed. It had also been ascertained that he left a widow and daughter, who lived in comparatively humble circumstances on Sixth Avenue, in the vicinity of Clinton Place, and



to the former of whom the money and valuables had been given, after an official investigation of her claims had been made, and the attorney delegated by her had applied for papers of administration as executrix of a will she produced, which was dated some two years previous.

The house where the murder had occurred was a four-story brick building, with brownstone trimmings and high steps of the same material, bounded by an iron railing. It was capped with a mansard roof, and upheld by a kitchen basement and dining-room. The windows of the latter, partly covered with light gauze, looked out upon a small area, in which were a few strands of stunted grass shooting up from the interstices of the granite slabs, and separated from the sidewalk by a picket-and-rail iron fence. It was a substantial dwelling, of the style of architecture in vogue thirty-five and forty years ago, was in excellent repair, save the rickety window-shutters, and only in its interior decoration varied in general appearance from thousands of houses on the cross streets running east and west of the city. A few years before, it had been the home of a wealthy merchant who had moved from it unwillingly to a more pretentious and, presumably, more fashionable residence up-town, in deference to the assiduous pleas of his family, who said they craved "a more congenial atmosphere." The other buildings in the block were similar; some, larger, of plain brick alone, while one or two were faced entirely in brownstone. But the neighborhood still retained much of its former dignity (though the grandeur had departed) as a desirable locality, for property was valuable and



some society people still held possession of their own family mansions.

For two or three days, a gaping crowd of curiosity-seekers hovered about the premises, despite the fact that a burly policeman, especially detailed, served his harsh summons upon the throng "to move on." The third day after the discovery of the murder (Friday) there was announced, by suitably crimson-lined posters, placarded in various parts of the city, and by generously displayed advertisements (with the usual reading notices elsewhere) in the leading dailies, a proffered reward of \$1,000 for the capture of the party or parties cognizant of the crime. These notices excited some adverse comment, as the sum to be awarded was regarded as inadequate in behalf of a man who must have left behind the moiety of "a cool million." This amount, however, was really approximate to the entire value of ready cash and the estimated worth of the jewelry found among the dead man's effects, for no appraisement had yet been made of the contents of the valise. The detective force was said, as is usual, to be "actively engaged upon the affair," and "some startling developments might be expected soon."

The press, however, soon began to refer to this mystery of No. 14 as beyond the ken of detective insight, and to accuse these "sharp fellows" of their usual gross incompetency in sifting the facts. Individually and collectively, the detectives themselves were obliged to confess their utter helplessness, though some of them ascribed it to a vendetta. Catherwood had, in all probability, been followed from the West, and, at the first opportunity, killed



by his unknown enemy, who was then possibly, like an ominous bird of flight, thousands of miles away. Visions of the Mafia and speculations relating to the Carbonari ran riot through their brains, and there was a general partly expressed belief among them that any one taking a special interest would become "a marked man." The idea of fighting, single-handed, a powerful, vicious, and moneyed organization was not a palatable one.

The murder, peculiar as were the attending circumstances, barely lived its allotted time as a nine-days' wonder, and as a sensation was succeeded by the more racy details of a divorce suit against a favorite comic opera singer, in which her leading man was named as co-respondent; and before the types rehearsing the spicy testimony were cold, the gratifying morsel of news was heralded to the prurient gossips that Mrs. Shoddy's eldest daughter, "a young thing of twenty-seven," had "really and honestly" eloped with the English coachman, an imported article that the family had taken upon trial only six months before. The late Mr. Catherwood had been an ordinary individual, who had lived an ordinary existence in the mining districts of the Pacific slope, and who, though leaving this world in rather an unordinary manner, had, by his untimely exit, bestowed a goodly fortune upon a family of the same kindred nature. As a sop of consolation, it must have been acceptable, so idle rumor said. True, a ghastly murder had been committed, and the community ought to have satisfaction tendered their disturbed nerves, by hearing of the capture, conviction, and execution of the criminal; but the entire affair was



otherwise, in the language of a tired swell of Lexington Avenue, "too awful commonplace, doncher know." And in behalf of the deceased there was really no complaint. There are two classes of men who are unfortunate. One has too many friends; the other has none. Catherwood could be included in the latter category.



## CHAPTER II

### THE HOME OF MRS. CATHERWOOD.

It is quite possible that they were an ordinary family, but there had not apparently been, for months past, a happier or more contented one in the whole metropolis. Mrs. Catherwood at the age of sixteen had been married to the deceased, who was about twenty-five years her senior. She had been completely subjected—"carried away" is the common expression—by that infatuation which a middle-aged man seems frequently to exert on a very young girl. As Marie Childs, her youth had been unpleasantly marked with tribulation. She had suffered the stings of poverty, and had been condemned to the daily struggle of aiding her widowed mother in providing the necessaries of life for themselves and the two younger children. Many a supperless night had she crept sobbing to her bed.

It was at a picnic, given under the auspices of the Sunday school she attended—along the banks of the pellucid stream meandering through Hoboken, the famous Sluice Creek, that flows from the marsh lands at the south and west, on northward, past West Hoboken—where her boy cavalier had been superseded by Mr. Catherwood. That person had taken a fancy to the pale face and wistful eyes of the girl, and suddenly entertained the idea that it was time



for him to marry, remembering solely the biblical injunction of St. Paul, which had a pertinent application to him personally, as he then believed. He prosecuted his suit so vigorously that the mother, awed by the magnificence of a man who wore a genuine diamond pin in the wide expanse of shirt bosom at that time in vogue, and gratified to think her daughter would have a home of her own—a dispensation of fortune never granted to her—gladly consented to let him take the child in marriage, in return for which complaisance her financial and bodily needs received considerable attention from the generous wooer. In fact, until her death, three years later, he enacted the popular *rôle* of the model son-in-law, though he had no ulterior motives in so doing. He aided her and the remaining children, James and Robert, by contributions from his pocket and by wholesome advice from his store of worldly wisdom, which led to her ending her days in peace and with the respect of her neighbors. The boys were then taken in charge by a relative—a Vermont farmer, who needed their help in return for their board and clothes—and Mrs. Catherwood had gradually ceased to hear from them as they grew to manhood and found homes of their own. The family acquaintances had prophesied misfortune when she married, forecasts based upon their belief in the old adage that to

“Change the name and not the letter,  
Change for worse and not for better.”

She never knew this, but the poor little wife soon recovered from her fantastic love-dream. For three



months she was madly, almost ferociously, in love, being imbued with an imaginative affection for the man whom strangers usually supposed to be her father—for such his appearance would indicate were their relations. Then, one by one, the illusions faded, and she knew at last that she had assumed a fancy to be a fact, and that she was mated to one whose characteristics grew daily more distasteful to her natural refinement of mind, whose obtuseness was in such strong contrast to her keen and rapidly developing intellect that it excited her contempt. He often found her in tears, but she could never give him an explanation of the cause. How could he possibly understand! She knew that she wept for the lost youth taken from her—for the charm of a congenial love she would never know. At eighteen she felt like an old woman. She wore a maturity of look that was painful to see.

Catherwood was thriving in his business, but he was of an economizing disposition, and did not regard picnics and entertainments as a necessity. To him they were a luxury, and indulgence of this kind should only be had at long intervals. So the girl-wife, who rapidly grew into the cares of womanhood with her childish longings still unsatisfied, though she was properly clothed and fed, was starved in brain and soul. There was no giddy nature in her desires, for she was rather religiously inclined; but she was being deprived of the opportunities of enjoying the spontaneities of youth, and she had an artistic temperament which craved the poetry of life as illustrated in the theatres, art galleries, museums, and books. She was only allowed an opportunity to



realize her aspirations in the last, and, by chance and jot—sometimes by the use of a trifling deception—she consumed all the literature that libraries or her scantily filled purse could furnish; for the husband, while paying promptly all bills she contracted for the legitimate uses of the household, did not believe in supplying a wife with an abundance of spending-money, and invariably kept the strings pulled quite tight on what he was pleased to term prodigality.

The coarse cloth slippers he wore, which were run down at the heels, with a hole or two in the sides, and which he displayed ostentatiously as, wrapped in a faded pea-jacket (an “excuse” for a dressing-gown), he mounted his feet upon a chair while reading the evening paper at the home fireside, were all emblematical of his individual system of parsimony. The stale brier-wood pipe from which he puffed generous clouds of second-rate tobacco was his only self-indulgence; but the nicotine-laden atmosphere was sickening to the nostrils of his wife.

Extensive and judicious reading had taken, for Mrs. Catherwood, the place of a liberal education. The few volumes of classical standing she had collected to form her library—a proceeding which her husband regarded with some contempt, if not outspoken scorn—were as well known to her as the familiar lines of a text-book are to the earnest student. The few thumb-marks upon them were the imprint of his own greasy fingers as he had handled them in careless curiosity.

How and when the rapturous affection for her husband died from her heart she could not have told if she had been asked. She only knew that about



three years after the birth of her daughter (she was then twenty-one), when her husband walked into the trim little parlor and told, her with the first display of agitation she had ever seen in him, that he was a ruined man—that some speculation in sugar had been his financial undoing, and that he must seek new fields of enterprise to recover his lost fortune—she did not grieve at the thought that he was going away and she might never see him again, or that this peaceful home was broken into by some new condition—some factor that would change all the old life. She did know, and she hugged the baby to her breast in frightful dismay of her own wicked feeling, that she would be rather glad than otherwise to have him go.

Jabez Catherwood was not an object of interest. To describe him briefly, he was "lanky." Bodily he was tall and thin, with light hair and a reddish straggling beard on cheek and chin. His *tout ensemble* was that of a country storekeeper, and he now looked fully ten years older than when he married her. His ready-made clothes hung ungracefully upon his sloping shoulders, and his trousers and boots belonged to the type denominated as unclassified. She had added but little in her appearance of age since then, and the fragile girl of sixteen had become a lovely woman with soft dark eyes, abundant nut-brown hair, and a *svelte* graceful form that was only well-developed maidenhood.

The dwelling in which they lived—a plain three-story brick building, as undistinctive as a house could be—had a year before been deeded to her, and thus a protecting roof was a present mainstay. The



financial wreck was not complete, and her husband had been able to place a few hundred dollars in the bank for her support after his departure. It was not a sorrowful parting to either, though there were regrets and painful retrospection. He had grown callous and selfish, and, in some indefinite sense, blamed his wife, believing that if he had remained single this misfortune would not have come upon him. Conscious of the knowledge that she had carefully heeded his admonitions and attended to his comforts, and that she had been faithful to her marriage relation—not in the meaning of proving recreant to the vows made at the altar, however—she was indifferent to his opinions or his actions. The love that in the fervor of her first passionate dream she imagined had been aroused in her breast had died a slow, painless death, and nothing remained to fill the vacancy but the consolation of her religious belief.

Only for the child that had come to bless her inane existence, she might have grown to hate the incubus in the shape of the man whose name she bore. But this enormity was spared her. Her heart had not been awakened, and though she knew there was something lacking in her life, she did not imagine the cause. Never had there come to her the words of the poet:

“I have another life I long to meet,  
Without which life my life is incomplete.  
Ah! sweeter self, like me, art thou astray,  
Trying with all thy soul to find the way  
To mine? Straying like mine, to find the breast  
On which alone can weary heart find rest!”

He must go elsewhere to make a new start in life,



and she could not bear him company, as they both agreed. It would be a relief to be freed from his prosy comments on such uninteresting subjects as the fluctuating price of eggs, bacon, and potatoes. She didn't possess the slightest relish for trade, and had no genius for buying or selling. She had admitted this freely to him, often, always to his intense disapprobation; and she was proud of her inability or ignorance, as he called it.

The day of his departure, he shuffled into the parlor, and, standing before her, began speaking, in an injured tone of voice. "S'posing I don't git into business until your money is gone that you have in the bank, Mariah. I can't give you a cent more till I earn some, unless they settle that case of mother's family, down in Virginia—the one of Peck *versus* Burden,\* you know."

"That's where the 'infant heir' died some years ago, at the age of seventy," she interpolated with quiet scorn. "I shouldn't think you would have much hope of retrieving a fortune from that."

"I don't, Mariah," and the nasal twang to his speech was very pronounced; "but a few dollars would be welcome now," he continued, deprecatingly. "The question is, If I don't git hold of some money for a year or two, what will you do?"

"I haven't thought much about it, Jabez." In truth, she hadn't given the subject a moment's consideration. "But I believe I can get along. I might try keeping boarders—just one or two, to make it a

\* This famous suit, after being in court (Augusta Co.) about a hundred years, was finally settled, in June, 1891, granting \$15,000 to almost innumerable heirs.



private family arrangement. I presume my knowledge of books will also help me."

"Books!" and he spoke with an undisguised sneer and a cutting, sarcastic tone. "Lots of good they'll do you! Better sell them to a second-hand shop. It ain't in you to be a literary character. Do you think you can git a place as liberian?"

Mr. Catherwood's accents were not refined and his language was not always grammatical. Even his pronunciation was faulty. Just at present there was a hateful tension in his voice, as if he was desirous of rousing his wife to some exhibition of annoyance or ill-feeling; but only the expression of contempt on her face deepened. In his rough, expressive vernacular, he had been obliged "to hoe his own row" since the day he became an orphan at his home in Poughkeepsie, and had come to New York City to clerk in a grocery store, which line of trade he had conducted for the past fifteen years, establishing himself in business out of the hard-earned savings of his youth and early manhood. There had been no opportunity for giving himself an education, for which he had little inclination, however; and his sole ambition, if he possessed a sufficient mental aim to be dignified by that term, was to get "a pile of money," upon which he would exist the latter years of his life with a virtuous and self-satisfied complacency of mind in knowing that he had done no man wrong. And this was true. He had been honest. But neither his capabilities nor his mental energies were great; and even in the one line of endeavor to which he had give the best years of his life, the result had been failure. There were some undefined sentiments



in this man's mind—some cravings to which he had never dared give verbal expression; but he knew that with great wealth he would be a different personage from what he was now—a great philanthropist, or, possibly, a great scoundrel; and there really isn't much difference between the two. His associates could have told you that he was a well-meaning sort of fellow, thoroughly reliable, but not particularly brilliant. His enemies, who were few, for he was non-combatant and non-communicative, said he was weak; or, if they were especially unkind, called him heavy and stupid.

So, much should be forgiven Jabez Catherwood—his inelegance of speech, from lack of youthful facilities to better his use thereof; his harsh words, because at forty-six he is a sour, dispirited man, ruined in pocket, and aware in some indistinct way that his wife cares little for him and has no sympathy to offer. To his coarse mind, it was about even.

She *was* a disappointment. That girlish love of hers didn't last long. He ought to have married a woman who would have been of assistance to him—some one who would "have taken hold of things" and, if necessary, helped him about the store. But, no; she had moped when in the house, must needs have a servant, and would rather read tiresome books than darn his socks. He had been forced to confess to himself that he didn't understand women; but then, as thousands of other men, many of them with much finer intellectual acumen than he was known to possess, had made the same acknowledgment, there was nothing novel in this reflection.

A beam of hope comes to him, however, while he



muses, and he sees a future in which he may have wealth untold—in which there will be comfort and, yes, perhaps love for him. Unwittingly, he strikes his forehead with his open hand. *That* is the thought, the *ignis fatuus* of his sterile brain, whose fitful flashes and illusory whispers have stirred his dormant faculties for weeks, months, years past. Yes, love! such as a girl way back in the times gone by showed him—a tender-hearted maiden, who was willing to be his abject slave when he was a curly-headed chap, but, with all the unappreciativeness of youth, he had been indifferent. What devotion she gave him! How the love-light shone in her pretty, dark eyes! Once, he remembered, she had raised his hand to her lips and kissed it, fondly, with childish impetuosity. Ah! life was *couleur-de-rose* then. And when she was offended at his stupidity, what a lively, scornful *moue* she made at him! He drew in his breath with a whistling sound, as if ready to taste the cheek of a luscious peach. It caused the stagnant blood to throb in his flaccid veins. Oh for a year of that boyhood, with its glorious impulses and its rose-colored hopes and giant-like faith! He would gladly give his life for that. The wishing was delirious pain. She went on the stage, for she was talented, became a great actress of emotional plays, lived a life full of scandals, and died, worn out, at forty-two. He had thought of going to see her play a few years before, when she was filling an engagement at the Union Square Theatre; but it was an expensive luxury, and he did not want to take time from his business. If he had married *her*! She would have been a better woman, perhaps, and



he would have saved the thousands that flittered through her hands like drops of water. *They* wouldn't have evaded his grasp. What tiny, pink-tinted fingers she did have!

Certainly no one would have imagined, from the outline of his vacuous features, that Jabez Catherwood could ever have had his soul swayed by such poetical and fiery longings. Possibly he was an exception to the art of the physiognomist. Nothing could be more foreign to his *personnel* than an amatory disposition. Such were his vagaries as he gazed down upon the placid-looking woman, sitting in a rocking-chair, who did not know that his stony glare indicated the restraint that only prevented him from cursing her—he trembling with rage. He could just begin to understand why some men were so brutal as to beat their wives, and he was dimly conscious of the reason why constant “nagging” would prompt a man to make of himself a voluntary widower.

She had done her part toward keeping the house in order—had attended to his comfort, cooked just what and how he liked; but there had been a void—a lack of method or manner. He was unable to explain. She couldn't be accused of extravagance, though the furniture and furnishings had cost him many a dollar, and there was a handsome carved case well filled with books, some of them in costly binding. As his eyes roved over them he became maddened, and repeated, in a coarser and more scornful tone: “Presume you'll be a liberian, do you?”

His wife raised her eyes, soft and brilliant, from the shadow of their ophidian lids, apparently in wonder at his loud, threatening voice, but answered



calmly: "I haven't thought of it, Jabez. But I shall not remain idle while you are away. There are many situations that a woman can fill, and I shall do my best. Then, I intend to see that Nellie gets what neither of us had—a good education."

"S'pose 'cause I didn't have an eddication I couldn't git along with the store!" he continued, shifting uneasily on one leg and throwing one foot across the other as he rested his elbow on the mantel-piece. "Is that it?" he questioned his ire raising at the remembrance of the money he had lost, and his wrath accelerated against his wife because of her quiet dignity.

"No, I didn't say that, nor did I think it. But, you know, education fits us for better things——"

"*Better things! Fiddlesticks!* Eddication can't keep the market from going ag'inst you, as it did me. Give her all the eddication you please, but don't larn her to despise her dad 'cause he ain't a scholar. I won't have it."

"You needn't fear. I know what is due you as a father, and I shall not let Nellie forget it. She shall be taught——"

"Fine words, marm," he interrupted again; "but they don't do me any good. My gal is not to be brought up ag'inst her dad, I tell you," he retorted with much insistence of tone. "Some time, I'll come back here with plenty of money for *her*," and his manner was prophetic.

"I hope so, Jabez. We shall wait and pray for you."

"There, don't be sanctermonous! Do the right thing—that's all I ask. Don't let her turn against her



dad," and there is a pathetic entreaty in the voice of the man who was never known to have a spark of sentiment. The "baby" was the only object in life now that appealed to his heart.

"You're well fixed here, and I'll send on some cash jist as fast as I kin raise it."

There was a little more desultory conversation, and when silence fell upon them she rose and turned away to pack in his hand-satchel the few belongings he would take. Surreptitiously he made his way to the nursery, and kissed and fondled the sleeping child, who awoke with a startled and hungry cry; and then, swinging it in his arms, as he attempted to sing a lullaby, he hushed it to sleep again with heart-broken fervor. With a feeling of despair he retraced his steps down the stairs, clutched at his well-worn carpet-sack when handed to him, gave his wife's cheek a brush with his lips, and received a cold salute from her. Saying "Good-by," hurriedly, and running from the doorway, he jumped upon a horse-car—from Fifty-ninth Street to the Astor House—without a farewell glance toward the nervous woman who watched him depart or the house he had left forever. With faltering steps the wife returned to the parlor, and, sinking upon her knees by the lounge, burst into a violent paroxysm of tears. Of grief?—hardly. Of relief?—it is possible.



## CHAPTER III.

### ARRIVAL OF THE TRAIN.

JUNE 17th has for more than a century been a memorable day in our national history, and so it was of individual import to several people—who, however, cared little for the commemoration of the Battle of Bunker Hill—in the good year of our Lord, 1873. Jabez Catherwood had been granted, under a final dispensation of Providence, the wish of his life, and largely by sheer luck had become possessed of a very productive mining property, one-half of which he had sold, rumor stated, for a million dollars. From his remaining share, a generous dividend was guaranteed him, payable every six months. But he had endured many privations; he had struggled and suffered during the greater part of his stay in the West, and now he remembered sadly, as he stepped down from the train at Jersey City and went briskly forward to the slip, that it was nearly ten years since last he had seen the surging waters of the Hudson. He gazed with delight at the myriad craft of sail and steam that was darting up and down and across the heaving billows of the North River, with yachts, cat-boats, bum-boats, and naval vessels lying lazily at anchor down the Bay over toward the shores of Long Island. Hurrying forward to the left for the ferry-



boat to cross to Desbrosses Street, he sniffed the afternoon breeze with keen delight.

"Nothing like it, Stella, anywhere else in the world. There's a scent of home in the very wind," he said to his companion, a robust young woman with large, bold black eyes and a form of voluptuousness in its outline, richly clothed in silk and lace—a rather too gorgeous combination of beaded bonnet and flaming feathers resting upon the brow that was partly hid by fluffy hair of a straw color. She apparently had lately had access for the first time to a plethoric pocket-book, and had utilized its contents in arraying herself in habiliments of costly value with but little knowledge of the canons of good taste in dress, or else with a wilful ignorance of appropriate blendings. In the language of the vulgar, she did not look "genteel." Her escort was clad in a well-made suit of broadcloth that fitted him quite snugly; his plain black tie was knotted carefully, and his new silk hat reflected the rays of a warm sun. He presented a better appearance than did the gaudily attired female who clung with an affected air of pride to his arm. Jabez Catherwood was now in his fifty-sixth year, but his self-imposed exile to the country west of the Rocky Mountains had improved his looks. He was heavier and straighter, and there was the air of the prosperous man about him. A rather ostentatious display of jewelry, which he considered tangible evidence of wealth, only detracted from his *tout ensemble*. They both presented a striking appearance, but bore with proper nonchalance the stares of the usual motley throng of passengers.

"Of course, I wrote my wife that I was coming,



but I'm not going home at once. Don't know whether I'll go there at all. She's done without me for several years, and she kin wait a few hours longer. The old lady and I must separate anyhow [this allusion to a supposed venerable female was for the purpose of further impressing his companion of a disparity in age that must necessarily exist between himself and Mrs. Catherwood], and the sooner she gits that fact fixed in her mind the better. I must tend to you fust, dear," he concluded with a chuckle and an attempted look of lover-like fervor in his pale blue eyes—eyes which looked firmer and stronger, however, than they did when he had last gazed upon the scene before him.

He was a successful mine operator now, and the sense of defeat and worry did not linger about his face as it had a decade ago. He acted leisurely; his movements indicated careless ease, and he seemed to be desirous of posing before the casual observer as one who lived only for enjoyment and *pour passer le temps*. There was general improvement in everything about him but his grammar—which was as slurring upon the memory of Goold Brown as ever.

"You're so nice," she whispered in return, pressing his arm.

With great enthusiasm he pointed out the various steeples and towers of the city, and the location of the Battery; told her of the peculiarities of Castle Garden; tried to show her the Narrows, and directed her attention to Weehawken Heights, in a revivification of his local geographical knowledge. As the unwieldy boat bumped against the piles, she gave a little cry of surprise and assumed feminine nervousness.



"That's nothing, Stella. We're going into the dock all right," and his voice was full of courageous assurance. Midst the rattling of chains and the shrill escape of loosened steam, the boat was fastened to the pier and they passed along over the walk under the sheds, and past the crowd of calling nuisances of importunate hackmen and cab-drivers, her whole heart apparently wrapped up in the elderly individual who carried himself with a jaunty air and the pompous stride of a second-rate man who has finally reached the goal in affairs of finance and the heart. His mimicry of youthful elasticity was so marked as to invite the sarcastic comment of a bystander, that he had "a sort of bloom on the boom walk."

"To the Sinclair," was his command to the obsequious cabby, as he handed the fluttering divinity into the carriage, threw his satchel after her, and then lumbered into the vehicle. He had thought of the Metropolitan, with Niblo's Theatre buried in its confines, and had reflected upon the inducements offered by the Grand Central; but mature consideration led him to the conclusion that the hotel named suited his purpose best. As the hack trundled down to Grand Street and then up Broadway, he lifted his hat from the round bald head, allowing the wind to ruffle the few strands of hair still free from gray, and having much the blonde color of their youth. Then he stroked the heavy Burnsides, his only hirsute adornment, which were dyed a generous black. His entire personal adornment, to the four or five diamond rings of different sizes that sparkled on his big hairy fingers, was symbolical of the "regardless of



expense" principle. Replacing his head-covering, he slid one arm around the pliant waist of the gorgeous maiden, and drew her to him with a hug that nearly shattered the steel clasps of her corset.

"Home again, dearie! Here's where we'll have fun all the day long; where money will buy anything you want; where I'll shower gold upon you till you're tired of me; where——" What more conclusions he would have reached will never be known. The salt air that he had engulfed in such appreciative whiffs while crossing the river had irritated his nasal passages, or possibly had induced symptoms of a slight cold; for just here he interrupted himself with a sneeze that sounded like the detonation of a dynamite cartridge, caused an involuntary shudder to pass over the form he held in his grasp, and startled the driver to such an extent that the fellow muttered in amazement, "Jiminy crickets!" But then a sneeze that will drown the surface roar of a New York street is not a common matter. Indeed, it might have been classed as miraculous, for it is more than a phenomenon. She wanted to laugh, but, mindful of her interests, she buried her face in the folds of his coat, and with a plaintive cry choked the incipient giggle.

"Oh! that could never be," she gasped with her head lying upon his breast, in response to his remark relating to her possible future change of regard—nestling closer to him, if possible, with a simpering smile on the face she lifted to his that would have awakened disgust in a wiser man.

"You have been too good to me," and she threw one arm about his pudgy neck, while kissing him on



his hard, rough cheek. By one mighty effort she strained a crocodile tear from the shining eyes that gazed straight into his with a fervid look of intense adoration, mildly tempered by gratitude. Then a little hand, red and stubby, however, as if the owner had done hard work with it in its early history—one bearing a faint reminder of scrubbing-brushes and dish-pans, but now redolent of scented soap—patted him on the shoulder, and a voice that belonged to the hand murmured in his ear: “I have never known what it was to love a man till I met you, Jabez.”

“Honor bright?” almost shouted the delighted, credulous man, who had been slowly recovering from the shock of that stentorian sneeze with an angry self-condemnation, in the belief that he had made himself an object of ridicule, his whole frame thrilling with this realization of a forty years’ dream. “You do love me, truly, for myself alone?”

And the lying lips murmured assent, her breath tickling his ear: “For yourself alone, Jabez, dear. How could I do otherwise? You took me from dirt and poverty, and have made a lady of me.”

A lady! Poor, abused word! As if clothes or jewels or birth or family could bestow that inherent quality upon a woman—could confer upon her that nameless grace of bearing and breeding that needs no herald, no adventitious pomp or circumstance to proclaim her true worth, her inalienable right of being a lady. There is no counterfeit presentment but what proclaims its own fictitious stamp.

If they had been married, it would have been a miserable burlesque upon conjugal felicity; but as he only sustained the position of a protector to this



gaudy creature, this display of amorous trifling, in which he presented the character of fool and she enacted the part of siren, was simply tiresome and nauseating.

Just then a hurried glance told him they were near their destination, and a moment later they stopped at the hotel entrance. After a few whispered words of endearment, he saw her escorted to a room from whence he retraced his steps to the awaiting Jehu outside, and was driven to a boarding-house between University Place and Fifth Avenue, that he remembered as having seen advertised in the *Herald* of a few days before, when he had picked up a copy of that paper in Chicago. Why he should have chosen this method of procedure he might possibly have explained more fully than he had done to the young woman; but the only reason he gave himself was, that he did not care to hasten back to the scenes of domestic infelicity. There was a longing in his soul to see his little girl, who must be, certainly, a well-grown miss. He would make a *lady* of her. To-morrow he would send for her. As for Mrs. Catherwood, she must understand that he would insist upon a divorce, and if she was "sulky," he would starve her into submission by withholding supplies. The milk of human kindness was not likely to generate cream in the heart of Jabez Catherwood. If she was docile and would give him his freedom, even by collusion, he would settle a small fortune upon her. He did not seem to understand that his wife had certain legal rights, nor did he know that she was financially quite independent of him. At present, he needed a long rest; for though he



would not confess it to the Miss Estelle Wagner who had been his *compagnon-de-voyage*, his age created some demands, and shortly after an early dinner he retired to his room, sleeping heavily until the last breakfast bell rang, at eight o'clock in the morning.

The next day, Monday, he was busily engaged in various little errands, calling at the hotel, buying tickets for the evening's performance at the Fourteenth Street Theatre, transacting business at the bank, receiving during the afternoon some visitors in his room, engagements with a hatter, tailor, etc.—for he intended to make a display of his wealth in personal attire at once, and in his vulgar desires hardly found the best good enough for him—and was found dead in his room the next morning, with the sickly glimmer of sunshine streaming through the lace curtains as the light fell upon his upturned face.

The police investigations would probably reveal more facts. Certainly, he had not used the theatre tickets, for the undetached coupons were found intact in his vest pocket. His watch had stopped at 2:23—probably at that hour in the morning. Was it the moment of his death? If he had fallen heavily, the jar would have stopped the watch. If not, the time-piece had simply run down.



## CHAPTER IV.

### SMALL EVIDENCE.

At the preliminary hearing, the mistress of the boarding-house testified that Mr. Catherwood had remained indoors from about three in the afternoon, but had informed her that, as soon as he had seen some tradesmen who would call upon him, he would leave, taking his evening's repast at a restaurant, and would then attend a theatrical performance. He had asked for a latch or night key, and she had wondered a trifle that he had not sent for it later; but the incident soon escaped her memory. There were about twenty people living in the house, and she paid but little attention to them, providing they came well recommended and paid their bills promptly.

Mr. Catherwood, in lieu of the former desideratum—although she had a vague remembrance of his having been a previous resident of the city, and was, as he stated, at one time proprietor of a grocery on Sixth Avenue—paid a week's board in advance, which was quite satisfactory to her. But she never troubled herself about the movements of her "guests," and knew absolutely nothing of their goings and comings, although she was aware of their various occupations. The chambermaid had tried to gain an entrance to his room, and when it was reported that the key was to be seen inside—she didn't know



whether the door was locked or not, but the catch had slipped—had called in a policeman, who forcibly entered the apartment. She appeared to be grieved at the possible chance of her boarders leaving her *en masse*; for several had already removed on account of this horrible affair, and was “scandalized,” as she expressed herself. This indicated she was from the South somewhere, because some of the few fashionable residents who still retained their homes in the vicinity seemed to think she was to blame for admitting such a person.

Did he receive people in his room? Yes, half a dozen or more called, but she did not see any of them. The door-girl could furnish that information. And the last-named, with a very red face, an embarrassed manner, and a Milesian accent, informed the magistrate, in response to his inquiry, that she admitted “siven gints and a lady.” Five of the former, it was already known, were business men of good repute. Their cards had been taken from the room. No suspicion could attach to them. Of the other two, one was described as a tall man with dark eyes and a white, severe face, while the last looked to the girl like a peddler.

“A peddler?” repeated the magistrate.

“Yis, sor; he carried a pack wid him.”

“Which of these two men called first?” was his next question.

“I don’t remimber, sor.”

“Don’t remember? That’s strange.”

“To tell the truth, sor, the two gintlemen and the lady all called so near together, sor, I disremimber which was fust or last, at all,” and she essayed a



smile, as indicating a self-possession she did not feel, but which only resulted in displaying her excessively red gums when she grinned.

"But who was the very last caller you admitted that evening?"

"The lady, sor," and again she showed her large, white uneven teeth.

"Are you sure of *that*?"

"Dead sure, sor."

"How do you remember that when you forget the other?"

"I don't know, sor; but it's true, it is."

"How was *she* dressed?"

"All in black, sor."

"Did you see her face?"

"No, sor."

"Why not?"

"She had a kind of veil on."

No subsequent cross-questioning or testimony from the other witnesses brought any more facts to light, as no one in the house—the clerks, an ex-widower, an elderly divorcee, a jocose bachelor, the melancholy man who played thrilling love-songs on the piano; an ancient female teacher, who believed she had a "mission"; a Mr. Fears, from Georgia, with the blatant talk of the half-educated cracker and the excessive ill-breeding of his class; a middle-aged married coquette, who nursed her several chronic afflictions and had lively spats with her subjugated and stupid husband; and two or three other married pairs, quiet nonentities—none of these had heard any unusual noise, and nothing seemed to be known by any one between the times that the lady was admitted



and the body was found. The city physician who had been summoned at the inquest stated that he had carefully examined the dead body, and was positive that the murder must have been committed at least twelve hours previous to the discovery of the corpse. The magistrate was not able to elicit any further correlative information, and the evidence heard only established the fact that the crime had been committed between the hours of five and ten the day before. The verdict of the coroner's jury, "that Jabez Catherwood was murdered by parties unknown," remained unquestioned.

The following day, as the magistrate was intently examining a curious stiletto-like weapon of apparently foreign manufacture, and pondering over its ownership, he was visited by an acquaintance, the chief clerk and manager of the hotel before mentioned, who told him that the "female party" who had come to his house with the deceased had left hurriedly about ten o'clock on Monday night. Catherwood had called upon her at quite an early hour in the morning of that day, and from some words overheard by an employé it was conjectured that the two were going to the theatre that evening. The man's infatuation was undisguised, and the woman acted "coy and affectionate." She had hired a carriage during the afternoon, and went out ostensibly on a shopping tour, and actually returned with quite a collection of bundles—store purchases, undoubtedly—which still remained at the hotel. After supper she retired to her room. A few minutes past eight she sent word to the clerk then on duty, asking if Mr. Catherwood had called. Upon receiving a



negative response she had immediately left the house, presumably on foot, and evidently greatly annoyed at his non-appearance, but returned an hour later, and in a very flurried, nervous manner ordered a cab to take her to the ferry, as she was leaving for the West on the eleven o'clock train by the Pennsylvania Road. Her only luggage was a small hand-satchel that could have contained little else than a few toilet articles. To-day, a handsome trunk she purchased had been sent to the hotel. The manager was desirous of knowing what disposition to make of these articles. He had been obliged to run up country yesterday morning on business, and only knew of the murder by reading an account of the inquest upon his return late at night. That explained his delay in making these statements. This young woman displayed a large roll of bills when settling her account, and was evidently very anxious to get away in haste. Still no suspicion had entered the hotel man's mind that there was anything criminal connected with her actions.

"What kind of a woman was she?" asked the exponent of justice.

"Rather loud in her dress and very fresh in her manners. Seemed to be fully capable of taking care of herself. She came there as a friend or acquaintance of Catherwood," and the speaker slowly winked his eye at the other. "Of course, as long as she behaved properly I couldn't object. I didn't see any effort on her part to attract attention, though the men would admire her stunning figure, and some of my lady patrons stared at her in dubious surprise when she was at the table. You know how women



are;" and to this last bit of social philosophy the magistrate nodded in sympathetic assent.

"Yes, I see," he added, verbally. "Do you know what is possible, George? There's been a quarrel about money matters between those two, and she became maddened and killed him. Dark, wasn't she—something like a Spaniard? They're a vindictive set," and he shrugged his shoulders as if deprecating any intention of involving himself in a dispute with any one of that nationality. "Nothing premeditated, of course, for this is Catherwood's own knife, I believe," handing the dagger to his friend as he spoke. "She was some cowboy sort of attachment that the old fellow picked up in the woolly West, and it may be he found out when he was at home that the connection wouldn't stand our effete civilization, and probably in an attempt to make her understand this—he has a family here—she resented his object, and in a fit of jealous rage and anger seized upon the first weapon at hand (in this case, his knife) which he had taken from his pocket or valise and laid carelessly on the table, perhaps, and stabbed him. It looks like it. I can't understand, though, why he brought her here. In the slang of the day, he should have 'shaken' her before he started East. He must have had opportunity. Presumably, she has done it. I'll send this news to the main office. Much of it is corroborative."

"But I don't believe your theory's right, squire. I saw her just before her departure, and there was no such expression on her face as a guilty woman would have who had just come red-handed from the consummation of such a hideous crime. I hadn't



taken any interest in her, but she seemed agitated at some unexplained cause, or worried at some unpleasant sight. If I had been asked, that night, to give my explanation of her uneasiness, I should have said that she had found Catherwood intoxicated, or had discovered some duplicity of conduct on his part. There was nothing of the horrible in her looks or actions; it was more the appearance of disgust. I'm not a detective, of course, but I don't fail in judging human nature when I study it from my hotel counter."

"My dear boy," responded the other, stroking his full gray beard, speaking in a tone of weariness as if conscious of his superior knowledge of all things mundane—a burden that made him quite *blasé*, and with a steely look in his eyes at this crude enthusiasm of his friend, which was only a veil to his ignorance of the inner workings of the mental and spiritual world—"I have no theory to expand. I don't mean to assert she is the guilty one—don't say it's as plain as the sunshine or use any other threadbare simile. The more appearances would indicate her connection with this murder, the less I might feel inclined to doubt her knowledge or complicity, unless premeditation could be proved. I've seen so much of crime, of wrong-doing, during my twenty years' experience on this bench, that I do not put the slightest faith in circumstantial evidence as ordinarily understood. Apparent motive, plausible reasons, are the veriest delusions if the accusation is one of prejudicial bias. The easier the elucidation of a crime seems the really more difficult it is of solution. Unless a man or woman is idiotic, they see at once that there must be suspicion if they have a motive in the death of any



one, and they don't do it, unless in the heat of anger. A servant may poison her mistress in a spirit of revenge. In the days of the *aqua tofana*, weary wives disposed of their husbands for the sake of the lover; and this method is not unknown at present even in the annals of our criminal records. But there is such a strong probability of detection that only weak-minded persons use that means. I really do believe that the perpetrator of this crime is one with sufficient genius to place murder on the scientific basis of a fine art. There is just one man, Hicks, on the detective force that can unravel this mystery, and it's a terrible pity he's away now. I don't think the rest of them are worth their salt. It's the possibility I look at. The boarding-house keeper may have killed him in a sudden frenzy of avarice at the sight of his money, prompted to secure some of his great wealth; don't you see? We don't know what she saw. It is certain a woman killed him."

"How do you know?" hastily asked the other, who was deeply interested in this strange conversation.

"How? Because the physician who examined the corpse, a man who knows his business thoroughly, declares that the wound was made upward, just as a woman always jabs a pair of scissors into an object. That's brains. He also declares that the woman must be one of unusual muscular power, for the knife was buried almost to the hilt through the tough striated tissue of Catherwood's body. That's more brains. Now, which woman was it? Your guest, possibly; but I don't jump at conclusions. That Mrs. Pentricks was a bony sort of creature, and made a disagreeable impression upon me. You should



have seen her lean, cadaverous face, thin, hard-pressed lips, and her fishy eyes. All indicates little moral power and an invincible determination. Couldn't it have been that hearty Irish girl? He might have attempted some liberties with her, and she resented them to his cost. You can't get people to confess in forty-eight hours necessarily. Conscience works very slowly with the best of us. She looked too innocent or stupid for that, of course. Bah! The most vicious creature I ever had before me was a timid, shrinking girl with soft pleading eyes and a look of angelic resignation on her face. Her blushes were so constant and unremitting and so deep of hue, that it was quite painful for me to cross-examine her; and yet it was proved she swore like a trooper, smoked cigarettes, and drank beer by the bucket, and she actually confessed to the poisoning of her aunt, her little brother, and a female boarder.\* The last two died. Born criminal, of course. She is serving a life-sentence now. The facts you have given me must go to the office for consideration, that's all. By the way," changing his position in the chair, as he did also his tone of morbid sarcasm and evident assumption of worldly incredulity, "how was the woman—your young woman—dressed?"

"In black silk and lace, with a sort of mantilla about her head which she threw gracefully over her bonnet. She had brought with her some of the toggery that the Spanish woman uses in California, you know."

\* Similar was the case of Mary Metzdorf, of Baltimore, aged sixteen years.



"And don't you see, again, my friend, that this description agrees with what the Irish girl said: 'All in black, and a sort of veil on'?"

"Yes, but that would answer the description of ten women out of twelve just at present. I don't believe you have the right clew, squire."

"I don't believe I have any clew—don't pretend to possess any such wisdom," responded the other, testily. "I don't believe in clews in the ordinary acceptation of the term. I'm almost tempted to say that I do not believe in anything," and he changed the position of his feet nervously. "What are we to think of such a case as I had here last week, when it was proved by twenty competent, reliable, honorable witnesses that the confession of a man to the robbery of a store was a falsehood, because he wasn't within a hundred and fifty miles of the place at the time? It was a great success as an *alibi*. What form of sanity do you call that?" and the cynical man of the world thumped his desk as he growled out the interrogatory. "His motive!" he continued, in an exasperated tone. "How do I know; how do you know? Did he want security from the pangs of hunger? Did he imagine that no work, and the consequent starvation, might drive him to the desperation of taking a jump from an East River dock? It doesn't matter," spreading out his fingers as if waving the subject aside. "Thank you for the information, George," as, rising, he indicated that the interview was at an end, his perplexed visitor turning toward the doorway, where he met some new applicant for justice hastily entering the legal portals.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE TWO BOARDERS.

A NIGHT, three weeks later. The gas-jets were burning brightly, though the air was full of a summer's heat, and the window-screens had not wholly debarred the entrance of flies and gnats, who buzzed about in the cheerful dining-room of Mrs. Catherwood's home. There were four seated at the table: the hostess, her daughter Helen, a miss of nearly fourteen, and the two boarders, John C. Harrod and Charles Davis. A general utility girl in shabby attire swung a horsehair switch lazily over their heads, and occasionally aided in the handling of dishes. The first-named of the men was tall and straight-set, about twenty-eight years old, with black hair, dark mournful eyes, and a soft brown mustache of great luxuriance shading the excessive whiteness of his cheek and chin. Charles Davis was a nondescript individual, anywhere from twenty-five to forty years old, who having had a considerable fortune left him in trust by his father, a successful tobacconist, was engaged in spending the income principally in feeding himself to an unlimited extent. He paid a good price for his board, and though he lingered long at the table, his room was always filled with an allotment of various fruits and assorted cakes, which he consumed in quietude. There were hourly



lunches, in which he indulged also, while engaged in his peripatetic tours about town. Life had but one scope to him, and that was to eat. His horizon was bounded by food.

In his daily walks, for years, rain or shine—"constitutionals," he termed them—he had been in nearly every nook and corner of the city; but he seemed to glean but little information from the constant panorama of life before his eyes. Current events made no impress upon him. He lacked the power of observation, and was at times so oblivious of his surroundings that he once unconsciously walked off a coal wharf at Harlem, and was only saved from drowning by the deck hand of a coaster, who lassoed him as he was sinking and pulled him to shore, landing him as if he were some marine monster. Davis had a horror of water ever afterward, and would even resent its appearance at meal-times as a beverage. But then, few New Yorkers care to drain their Croton supply unmixed. Every form of amusement or recreation—exercise, reading, even singing—was tabooed by him under his oft-repeated statement that they only served "to excite the brain." Food was his fetich; mental rest his elysium. He was hardly *non compos mentis*—not in money matters, at least—though he had the simple-minded appearance of one, and was regarded as an object of curiosity by the rest of the household. He read the daily papers when they came to him without cost, or when the bulletin boards were not surrounded by two large a crowd to hamper his freedom of movement.

Mrs. Catherwood was grateful to him, however, for coming to her assistance when she had first



advertised "meals and rooms for gentlemen in a private family," as his prompt payments had aided her when remittances from Jabez were small and infrequent, as they were during the first years of his absence. She even severely reproved Nellie, as her daughter had always fondly been called, for her misbehavior in jesting at the figure, actions, and general infirmities of Davis. Then Mr. Harrod had become a member of her family, and she was thenceforth free from any uneasiness regarding her ability to liquidate her table bills and those expenses necessary to the completion of the finished education she was trying to give her child. She supplemented her receipts by doing copying-work for libraries, her knowledge of books insuring accuracy of detail and statement, and by occasional sewing for her neighbors, as she had quite a local reputation for dainty patterns and originating delicate designs. She was a busy, contented woman while her husband was away.

The last comer was what half-ignorant, unobserving people called a mystery. Principally because he was self-sufficient, would not allow every one to impose acquaintance upon him, and did not readily enter upon details of his personal history in ordinary conversation. Educated at college, reared in affluence, his father had disastrously failed in business soon after the son's graduation, and then finished a burdened life by committing suicide. The young man was left to struggle with a world all the harder to him from the disaffection of so-called friends and the slights of those who had gladly claimed his attention while he was a prospective heir to great wealth, and the new experience was rendered all the harder



by the sneers of others, who were overjoyed at his downfall because they had previously been envious of his position. He was in reality only a good young man of scholarly tastes, singularly free from petty vices, and had been the pride of a mother who lived long enough to direct aright his boyish inclinations. Alone in the world, with not the slightest aptitude for business, and with no knowledge of how to enter upon the struggle for bread, he turned in bewilderment from the corpse of his father to face this new hazard of fortune. Possessed of a strong, self-contained nature, he gave immediate attention to the exigences of the present, and soon realized from the sale of his personal effects, and from a small property that he had inherited from his mother, a few hundred dollars. He then entered a divinity school, with the humble purpose of devoting his life to the welfare of his fellow-man. He was "a bright light" in the Presbyterian Seminary, where his polished scholarship and his logical mind were admired and respected. But a second misfortune befell him; a brimming cup of misery was held to his lips.

Attending an alumni meeting at Yale College, he had met the sister of an old schoolmate who knew his story, and the sympathy she had felt for the unseen man turned to love for the gracious gentleman who was a friend of her brother. It was the first strong passion of his life, and his heart and ambition were fired in this new sweet joy, that came to him with the assurance from her lips that she "cared" for him. He accepted it as a recompense for the sorrow that had come to him. They met but seldom, as the railroad trips from central New York to New Haven



were not only tiresome, but were a demand upon his purse that he could not easily yield. But letters, long and closely written, breathing their mutual devotion, passed semi-weekly between them. Once he had met her while she was visiting at the house of a relative in Utica, and those hours—in which they made their hopes and aspirations one—in which the lovely disposition of the woman and the grand character of the man were thoroughly revealed to one another; the fleeting moments he passed in her company, and the promised joy that was to be his—were a memory to him all his life sweeter than the fragrance of roses.

It was the last time he saw her. Two months later, while with her brother and a party of friends sailing on Long Island Sound, the yacht was caught in a sudden squall, capsized, and among the five persons drowned was his betrothed. The news, sent to him in a hastily despatched telegram, nearly unseated his reason. He hastened to the scene of the disaster in a dazed condition, having no other sense than that of a painful tugging at his heart-strings, as if life was being choked out in him. The body was never recovered, and after waiting weary days on the sands washed by the treacherous waters that had engulfed his loved one, walking the long, dreary streets of Flushing at night to help quell the tumult within his breast, he returned to New York City a broken-hearted man. In his grief and rage against the dictates of heaven he had almost cursed the existence that was a burden to him, had refused to continue the preparation for the ministry, and had declined sympathy and proffered aid from the family



whose bereavement was as great as his. He became a prey to melancholy. Like one prostrated beyond his physical strength, there followed a relapse, in which his mental nature changed, and, entertaining socialistic theories and incendiary beliefs, he had even given expression to them in some of the Fourth Ward meetings to which he had gained access, led there by those who knew of his dissatisfied life and who thought they saw in him the qualities which create the martyr. The police had his name on their list. He was among those enumerated as a suspect. But a second sober thought came to him later: he saw the dreadful chasm upon whose brink he stood, the wickedness and viciousness of those who in their effrontery would array labor against capital with sword and fire-brand to serve their own criminal interests; and he withdrew from the contaminating association. It was the only epoch in his life that always gave him a sensation of shame. Though the dictates of common sense resumed control, he still persisted in his vow to leave uncompleted his theological studies, and commenced a course of legal reading in the office of a leading practitioner down town. His means, rapidly growing limited, would not allow him the benefits of a law school, and he found the necessary opportunities of adding to his small store of money by writing an occasional special article for the press. It was at this time, while seeking quiet and comfortable lodgings, that he saw Mrs. Catherwood's advertisement. He made immediate application to be received as an inmate of her domestic circle, and was accepted. She seemed favorably impressed with his courteous demeanor, sorrow-



ing expression and high moral purpose, as written upon the face and brow of the man from whose white forehead the dark hair was thrown carelessly back in wavy profusion. As she gleaned his life's history from detached personal statements that fell from his lips, her whole heart went out in tender sympathy to him, which kindly feeling was shown in careful attention to his home comforts, a daily inspection of the needs of his wardrobe, and often in the setting of a dainty dish by his plate. Davis, with the only pronounced mental characteristic he possessed—that of envy—saw this latter movement, which he regarded as an especial encroachment upon his rights, and muttered to himself with an invidious shake of his head that “Harrod must be a sort of star boarder.” As the first auxiliary of the family, he thought himself entitled to the first display of generosity upon the part of his landlady, and had some thought of wreaking a mild vengeance upon her by changing his residence, and, as he supposed, thus curtailing her receipts, unaware of the change in her financial circumstances; which plan was forestalled before he had committed himself, by his receiving notice from her that she should decline keeping boarders after the expiration of the present week. This he understood to include Harrod with himself, and was gratified to know that his associate at the table could no longer be the recipient of special delicacies that were not presented to himself.

Contented with this cheerful prospect, Davis was gormandizing in an unusually happy frame of mind. It was perfectly natural that a woman with the fortune she had received from her late husband, and



with the large prospective dividends to be paid her from that Western mine (reputed to be a wonderful success) would hardly care to be bothered by serving the appetites of two men who were nothing to her. Neither did Davis know that the young lawyer had taken from her the great burden of arranging for the funeral ceremonies of the deceased, had paid the undertaker's bill, and, acting as proxy, had attended to the sepulture. He had also kept ubiquitous reporters of the press from interviewing her, while shielding her from all the annoyances naturally connected with this unfortunate event.

The daughter had looked upon her dead father's face, but the widow had not entered the chamber where lay the remains of her husband. Her composure was wonderful, but she had sought the seclusion of her room upon the return of the small funeral *cortège*, and did not appear until the following day. If there was any outpouring of grief, it had not left visible traces upon her face. Her manner was unchanged to those about her. She had little trouble in asserting her legal claims, thanks to her lawyer's intervention and assistance, and after her appearance in court with her attorney, who was one of the members of the firm under whom Harrod had studied, was left undisturbed in her retirement. She would not allow the presence in the house of any paper containing details of the crime. Though she was tremendously excited for some days, she quickly regained all her placidity and Quaker-like demureness of old, and the household arrangements moved on with little indication of the tragedy that had so affected the lives of mother and daughter.



Mrs. Catherwood sat at the head of the table, dressed in black—a slightly modified form of widow's weeds that fitted neatly her lithesome figure—the sombreness of the raiment only relieved by a plain white collar fastened with a jet brooch. She was mindful of the conventionalities of life, but she made no pretence of heart-broken sorrowing for the memory of a man for whom she had years before ceased to have even a feeling of respect. Miss Helen, who experienced a grievous stroke to her childish heart when first told of the death of her father—the facts had come to them through the newspaper columns—after indulging in some extravagant sobbings and hysterical conduct had rapidly recuperated from the shock, the cause of which must have been an undefined sentiment, as she had never known any caress from the man whose existence she only dimly remembered till she saw him lying in his coffin. There was not even a baby doll or a single plaything in her possession to connect her with the father of her childhood. Neither she nor the mother knew that the silver necklace with a pendant star, in the centre of which gleamed a brilliant diamond, so carefully wrapped in a blue plush box, was intended as a present to “the little girl” he had longed to see for so many weary years, from the man stricken down so suddenly.

Davis' *bête-noir*, the lawyer, sat talking at intervals, cheerful in tone but restrained in manner, as if there was a hampering thought, some recollection he could not put aside. But this was habitual with him. The other man only grunted his desires, pointing to some article of food with the solitary words, “bread,”



"coffee," "beans." The daughter prattled merrily of her school-day experiences, and the mother listened, patiently, dutifully attentive to all, and speaking but seldom.



## CHAPTER VI.

### DEVELOPMENTS.

AT the conclusion of the evening's meal the family separated. The hired girl wearily removed the dishes from the table, pausing at intervals to take a mouthful of some delicacy as a gastronomic incentive to her repast in the kitchen, the daughter going to the piano for her regular one hour's practice. There is no feeling of compassion in a young girl for the injury done to sensitive nerves. Davis wended his way into the streets to partake of an additional lunch and for the subsequent purchase of viands for a midnight attack or to break his fast before the welcome bell had rung in the morning. He possessed the one grand virtue, if we are to accept Franklin's precept, of being an early riser, though in this instance it was of no material benefit to mankind, except that he hastened to decrease the sum total of the world's produce. His principle of tariff reform was an extremely practical one. Its feasibility is to be commended, and should attract the attention, if not the sympathy, of the professional politician.

The tall young man, after completing a brief toilet in his room, had descended to the parlor, stopping at the door. Mrs. Catherwood, having given a final supervision of the servant's work, appeared a few minutes later from the dining-room and looked at



him wonderingly as he stood hat and cane in hand; for it was seldom he left the house at night.

"Going out, Mr. Harrod?" with an accent of surprise in her voice.

"Yes, there is a lecture, and I must listen to an exponent of some of the intricacies of the law, this evening. I waited, because I desired to speak to you of some matters. Naturally, I do not suppose you care to retain your boarders any longer, and I am willing to take my departure whenever it suits your pleasure." (Davis had hastened to impart the news to him that the widow would close the house in a few days.)

"Going away, Mr. Harrod!" The color left her cheeks only to be succeeded by a delicate flush that mantled her entire face, while one hand went nervously to her head in a vain attempt to smooth the unruffled bands of hair. Never before had he seen the serenity of this woman's look unchanged, and he marvelled at her flurried movements. Her hazel eyes glistened, the gleam of her white teeth showed beneath the partly opened lips as they almost chattered, and her bosom fell and rose in palpitating undulations. As he gazed upon her he was surprised to see that a little excitement made her a very beautiful woman, almost lovely. He was not susceptible to female charms, but he wondered now that he had never noticed how charmingly she was attired and what a captivating look she presented. She had, in common parlance, carried her age well. She might have passed for twenty-five, and, though she was four years his senior, really appeared to be the younger of the two.



"There is no necessity for your doing so," she said softly, as soon as she had recovered from her momentary agitation. "Mr. Davis has been informed that we do not care to retain him longer. He is so gross in his eating, and so very objectionable otherwise, that it is a relief to have him go; but with you it is quite different. I understand your allusions to my changed circumstances," and she ended the sentence with a gentle sigh. "It is true that I shall soon move from here, but I—that is, we—Nellie and I—look upon you as one of the family. We are both orphans, Mr. Harrod, you and I," looking up at him for the first time since she had been startled into the exclamation of surprise at his speech, with a sweet smile that intensified the dimples in her cheeks, "and I need some man—some gentleman, rather (she corrected herself, nervously)—to stay with us as a bond of protection. Later, perhaps," and now she had regained her composure, and the fluttering hands at last were under control, "if it is not pleasant for you, you may make other arrangements; but we cannot spare you for the present."

"It is very kind in you, Mrs. Catherwood," he replied, feeling unconscious of any incongruity in such a peculiar request coming from a woman, "and I must really tell you it is a great solace to me to know that I need not change. I should hate to leave here and seek other 'quarters,' for I have an intense dislike of the ordinary boarding-house, and I could never find another home like this."

"And I am glad that you will not go. You will simply remain with us as our guest, our old family friend." Once more, a furtive smile passed over her



face and converted her into a woman where love and passion seemed to cling to every feature and to glorify her presence. The man, who towered half a foot above the woman before him, had never known any feeling of conceit, nor had he ever supposed that there was anything in his personality to attract the female eye. His face indicated nobility of character, but only his brilliant black eyes redeemed his features from positive plainness. He was lithe and supple, and possessed what is usually termed a clerical figure. Mrs. Catherwood's kindness was a consolation to him, for his surroundings had been very pleasant and he was loath to leave them. He was quite satisfied to go with them elsewhere. The locality itself was not a desirable one. He felt a new interest in her, and a sensation crept into his heart he could not define. It was impalpable, but possibly it meant tender gratitude. There was no time for analysis then. In more cheerful mood, he spoke again:

"There is another matter I thought advisable to mention to you. I've just heard, incidentally, that the servant girl's testimony at the magistrate's hearing included the allusion to a tall man with a severe or set face. That flattering description undoubtedly refers to me. In other words, I am a suspected party. I don't suppose it's any one's business if I took a note from you to the late Mr. Catherwood, but I dislike anything hidden, anything that bears the appearance of secretiveness; and it is best, perhaps, I should inform the authorities at once that I was there and the cause of my errand. I can't see that my presence in that house has any relevant connection with the case, but it will involve, naturally, the re-



lation of the fact that your husband was so indifferent to you that he preferred the shelter of a stranger's house to that of his home, and you were compelled to address him there. It is an unpleasant task, and will create gossip, I fear. The papers, with their morbid love of sensationalism, in pandering to the low tastes of some people, will possibly make offensive statements and conjectures, and hurt your feelings terribly; but is it not my duty?"

A deathly whiteness had stolen over her face, and there was a plea of painful entreaty in the beautiful eyes as she replied, huskily: "Mr Harrod, don't. It is probably the only favor I shall ever ask of you. Do nothing of the kind, please." Her voice was low and hard, but its intensity of feeling affected him unpleasantly. "Don't you see that you are one of the suspected parties, as you truly said? In their haste to find the criminal they will prove you to be the guilty one, if it is necessary. Your delay in making the announcement will be prejudicial to your interests at the start. I know," she continued, as he made a gesture of dissent, and her tones indicated the dismay that his words had aroused and the dread of his possible refusal to accede to her request, "that you were too busy to pay any attention to the newspaper reports, at the time; but such an excuse will not be accepted. If they are unable to convict you—for I really believe your freedom would be imperiled—are not your prospects ruined for life, for you could not live down the suspicion? Think how terrible it would be to have your whole life clouded by a doubt of your integrity. Mr. Catherwood had acted in a brutal manner by his negligence of his



family, and I wrote asking him when my daughter was to have the honor of a call from him. Pride kept me from referring to myself." Here she dashed away a tear slowly falling from her eye. "It was satirical, I know; but I had no intention of making an acknowledgment that he had offended *me*. It is useless to disguise the fact from you that I cared nothing for him. He married me when I was a thoughtless, impressionable girl with no knowledge of love or the sanctity of our union, and then treated me with the same complacency that he would a favorite housekeeper or a salable horse. His habits affronted me, his ignorance made me ashamed of him, as I grew older, and his indifference to my cravings for proper enjoyment and the satisfying of my mental needs almost produced a feeling of repulsion in me toward him. We had become completely alienated many months before he left. I was quite willing to have him go away, and I had hoped he would never return." Her voice was full of vehemence. "I was a true wife to him, and yet he imposed the crowning insult upon me by bringing to this city some vile woman—some despicable creature he found in the streets or slums out West. But he was punished for his sin," and there was a slight unctuousness in her manner, as if she had been willing to accept without murmur this decree of Providence. "You told me," and the voice grew earnest again, "he threw the note angrily aside, saying he would attend to it. I now see the terrible mistake I made in asking you to deliver the message, but I wanted proof that he had received it. And then he spoke insulting words to you. Oh, I know it," as the



lawyer shook his head in disclaimer of the assertion. "You didn't tell me that, but I saw from your flushed face that your errand had been an unpleasant one, and I conjectured the cause. I know how his coarseness must have offended your tastes. What right had he to treat you so?" and she stamped her foot angrily. "Don't you see, again, if I were called upon to testify, and should tell the truth, as I must do, I would have to say you returned looking as if there had been a quarrel. Your mood indicated it. I don't believe there was one, you understand," and in her anxiety to convince him that she held him blameless, she unconsciously laid her hand upon his arm. The touch gave him a magnetic thrill. What sorcery did this woman exert over him! "It would be madness for you to say a word. Do you wonder that I did not display any great sorrow when I heard how he had died? Was it necessary for me to look as if I had walked through the shadow of death? Could I act the modern Niobe? How could I, without being a hypocrite? It may seem wrong to you, Mr. Harrod, for me to say it, but I am a happier woman now than I have ever been."

Her voice had changed, her movements altered, picturing many emotions from light to dark shades, from quick to slow, from pathos to scorn, as she spoke. Once, when she referred to his sin, the red flush had faded from her cheek, leaving a death-like pallor in its place, as if she hastily regretted her words, knowing that she had no right to judge him, and having a dim remembrance of the text, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay," which came to her with the thought that temptation might lead one even



of her calm temperament into the paths of guile. Virtue is easy when there is naught to lead astray. There was a mournful vibration in her entreaties. Nearly half her life had been one of secret misery, and yet she had borne her fate without murmuring till now. The pent-up emotion had at last burst bonds. It was such a relief to be able to talk to him, for he would understand. And he comprehended her fully. He did not stand alone, then, in the world, as one who had known great anguish of mind and heart; but he had not been as brave and patient as she. He pitied her greatly. He would not add to her distress, though he had little dread of being implicated as seriously as she imagined. She had been almost like a tragedy queen when she uttered her mild denunciations, and now it was a soft, gentle woman with a look of craving pleading that stood waiting to hear him speak. A solicitude for him, shown almost with loving entreaty, held him enthralled. He ought to let the police know who he was and why he had made this visit; but she had been so kind to him, had requested him not to do so with such tremulous force, that he resolved against his better judgment to be silent.

"I believe you have been a long-suffering woman, Mrs. Catherwood," he said gently, "and I haven't the heart to reopen any old wounds. Let the chapters of the old life remain closed. It shall be as you wish."

"It is for my daughter's sake more than for mine," and she spoke slowly, as if tired by the unwonted exertion of so much speech. "She knows nothing of the past. I can't bear to think she will hear of these



scandalous details and reports concerning her father. She honors his memory and I shall not disturb her faith. And you will not mention that you were there?"

"No, for the present I shall not. But I shall be late, if I do not hurry. Excuse me, please. Good-by," and he opened the front door hurriedly. There was some mesmeric influence by which this woman controlled him, and he wanted to be away from her presence. "I shall not be home till nearly eleven," he said to her from the steps.

"Good-by," she repeated, closing the door, and the sound of a choking sob in her throat almost dimmed her hearing. There was a rushing as of waters in her head, and the throbbing of her heart was painfully distinct. She pressed her hand against her side as if to ease the untoward commotion. Evidently, she was not able to withstand any undue amount of excitement.

"What a grand man you are, John," she whispered, pressing her lips against the cold panels, as if telling a confidence to the insensate wood. Heart and soul she adored the one who had just gone. The passion had been slowly gaining possession of her for months past. It had complete control now, and this was the first confession. It was the first in her life, and coming late was all the stronger.

"I love you!" she murmured still lower, and then turning, as if frightened at the impulse that had made her reveal the cherished secret, she ran rapidly up the stairs to her room.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MAN HUNTER.

AT what is known as the Central Office, in the vicinity of the "Bend" on Mulberry Street, in a large, high-vaulted room furnished substantially with desks, tables and chairs—the last bound and covered with red leather and adorned with gilt-headed tacks—sat Reuben Hicks, erstwhile farmer's boy and dry-goods' clerk in a New Hampshire store, but for the past five years a very promising member of the New York detective force. A strong liking and, as he believed, a special aptitude for the business had caused him to throw aside his position of counter-jumper. Leaving behind faint recollections of disagreeable experiences with tape and muslin, he hastened to Boston. After unsuccessful attempts to obtain employment in that city he had changed his last twenty-dollar bill in buying a ticket for the Metropolis, where he landed safely at Forty-second Street, and had readily been taken on trial by the police authorities. An opportunity was given him a few months later to track a noted criminal, and he had followed his prey from Canada to England, thence to France, arresting him in a *café chantant* of the lower order, with but the faintest clues as a guide. There was a tradition in the office that he could assume the character of an English baronet or a French



*chiffonnier* with equal celerity and efficiency. This first important capture of his had been considered "a very fine piece of work," and Hicks rapidly advanced in the estimation of his superiors.

As he rested on a cane-seated chair, occasionally falling into an error of his youth by tilting it back on one or two legs, he gazed straight at the green baize of the office table before him, as if compelling a revelation of secrets from out its unmeaning depths. He was a man of medium height, great muscular build, and a round, compact body. His legs were rather too wiry to be graceful, and had a slight twist in them that had caused some of his associates to refer to him jokingly as "Banty." His face was commonplace in feature, cleanly shaved, with a strong blue tint on his cheeks and chin, indicative of a heavy beard. His mouth was wide, firm-set, with quite full lips. A pair of dull-looking, small, blue-gray eyes looked from beneath a head of light-brown hair that was growing thin at the crown. He was about thirty years of age, but looked older; and, being clad in a fairly well-cut suit of plain gray cloth, was, if anything, an uninteresting person. People had remarked that when he was excited his eyes grew luminous and his large white teeth snapped viciously, as if he was a human tiger. Ordinarily, one would not think of accusing him of carnivorous instincts; for his general expression was that of urbanity, though his manner expressed an unsympathetic and unresponsive nature. He was the possessor of the ordinary education given to boys in the public schools of New England, with strong linguistic talents, which he had developed by great assidu-



ity, as he knew fairly well French, Spanish and German, and had a smattering of half a dozen other tongues. This acquisition, of inestimable service to him in his present avocation, was principally the result of self-study, though he had expended a few dollars in receiving tuition from "a master of languages." He was also familiar with the various dialects, or variations in local parlance, of the different sections of the United States, and it was quite impossible for a native of Georgia to pose before him as one born in Ohio. His *confrères* gave him the credit of saying little, promising nothing, and doing much. Still, he was capable of expressing his opinions in neat, concise speech, and was considered the best *raconteur* on the force in his moments of leisure; but he had not a single vice aside from whistling loud and long when by himself. He had ceased interlarding his conversation with tiresome "you knows," several years back. His talk was never boisterous; he never bandied vulgar stories. This omission, and his general contrast to the whiskey-stained, rubicund countenances of most of his associates, was quite marked, and alone would have called attention to him. He was a genuine Vidocq, a born hunter of criminals, and gloried in the ambition he felt for what he termed his profession.

As he mused, the door opened forcibly, admitting a draft of the cold, clammy November air and the rotund person of his chief.

"Hello, Hicks! how goes it?" exclaimed the latter in a tone of hearty greeting, and he stubbed his toes against the heavy Brussels carpet as he trotted across the room.



"Good."

"Anything on?"

"Nothing."

"What a moral place this town is getting to be!" sneered the chief. "Haven't had a robbery, or a defalcation, or a murder, for a week. Wonderful place," he continued in a dissatisfied, sarcastic tone. "We'll all be turned out of office next, just as soon as the dear public, the tax-payers, get on to this situation. 'Detectives luxuriating in their plush easy-chairs' will be a newspaper heading that will stir the community up. Say, help me off with my overcoat, please," he interpolated, backing up to Hicks as he was struggling to divest himself of the heavy garment. "Of course, we're no good, anyhow. By the way, did you hear—thank you," as the chinchilla at last dropped away from his burly form—"did you hear of the Catherwood case that occurred while you were away?"

"No, not while I was in Europe," replied the other, paying no attention to the undisguised ill-humor of his superior. He had heard similar complaints before, when a day or two had elapsed without bringing a series of ghastly crimes to horrify the public and arouse extraordinary activity in his *corps*. "Foreign papers say very little about this country; but I had a full account of it as soon as I returned, last week. I would like to make another trip, Chief."

"Why, where?"

"You'll see by this," unfolding a printed paper which he took from his inside pocket, "that Mrs. Catherwood—the widow, of course—has at my instigation increased the reward for the detection and



conviction of the murderer to the sum of \$10,000, and says she will let the amount stand for a year. It's general business, anyway, and I want to do something in the matter. The press pokes fun at us every now and then, and yesterday's *Evening Post* had Catherwood's name among a list of seventy-nine murders in one year that the police didn't find out. I'm tired of this newspaper sarcasm."

"Well, what do you want to do?"

"I want to go in search of the young woman that Catherwood brought with him from the West."

"What do you know about *her*?"

"Considerable. I know her name, and I have a photograph of her. You see," said the detective, growing communicative, "having little to do for the past few days, I have become interested in this mystery. It doesn't seem to me that much effort was made at the time to unravel this wound-up affair. It's too bad I was away when it happened. Mrs. Catherwood isn't very approachable, but I managed to secure quite a lengthy interview with her, and told her that to subserve the ends of justice it was necessary she should increase the promised award. Said she doubted if anything would be discovered, and wasn't disposed to talk much on the subject. But I urged her up to the point of giving me an order for these," crinkling in his hand the circular, which the other man now took from him and hastily scanned.

"Since Mrs. Catherwood has come into the possession of so much money she has grown 'tony,' as they say, and about four months ago moved over to the north side of Washington Square. Found out all



about her before I called, which of course I had a right to do. She had retained some papers and letters of her husband, and among them were notes—love-tokens—from his *inamorata*. They gave me her name—her right name, I mean—for she had registered as Carrie Welch at the hotel. The widow said she was just about to burn these scraps, thinking they were of no use, and twenty-four hours later I would have been too late. I don't understand it, though," and he sank into a train of thought from which he almost immediately roused himself, and continued: "Why didn't some one on the force try to get the girl's name and residence?"

"What girl? Oh, yes! that young woman. What had she to do with it? We didn't suppose the widow could give us any facts, and she wasn't asked any questions. She had no connection with our work, and was really pretty well hid at the time. Rather delicate matter, anyway—don't you see? Some fellow by the name of Harrod transacted all the business for her."

"Harrod! Who is he?"

"Oh, a young lawyer of the city. Don't know anything about him."

"Where does he live?"

"He did live—boarded with—her at that time."

"Ah!" softly murmured the detective. "If you'll excuse my saying so, the case hasn't been handled right. I don't wonder at the charge of complete apathy made by the *Times*. No measurements taken; not a bit of ribbon or a discarded glove found; no attention paid to the position of the furniture; absolutely nothing as a clew. The men must have been



asleep. I visited the vacant room, but couldn't find a blood-stain on the bare floor. I'd like to push it for a while."

"As you please. It's been too deep for us. We were all very busy just at that time, too. But how did you get her to put up this big sum?" and the speaker looked lovingly at the large type of the legend:

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD.

as if he envied any one the power to distribute so much money.

"Easy enough. I told her that the previous trifling inducement had not been sufficient to attract the energies of any one who might be of service, and that really it was so ridiculously low as to cause unpleasant remarks. The hint that she might be regarded stingy seemed to hurt her feelings, for she has strong perspicacity, and it made her a little aggressive. I mentioned this amount, and she agreed to it with the stipulation of one year's time attached; but she wasn't over-anxious to do it. Said it was only a renewal of a dreadful affair, and so on."

"Did she say she hoped the guilty party would be caught?"

"No," responded the other thoughtfully, "I don't remember that she did. I suppose, woman-like, she didn't want to hear of any more suffering inflicted. Didn't like the idea of my calling, and treated me as if I was intruding my unwelcome presence upon her. Has the general idea that detectives are a sort of reformed criminals, I imagine. I've more hopes from the daughter, however."



"What do you mean?"

"She's a young, confiding creature that will tell a stranger everything she knows in five minutes. While the mother and I were talking, this girl came into the room, and, hearing some remark of ours, understood with quick perception the subject we were discussing, for she immediately blurted out that she hoped the person would be caught and hung. Said something about her trying to find out as long as she lived. Spoke very scornfully of the stupid detectives. Real spiteful for a young thing," and the speaker grinned good-naturedly. "I intend to cultivate her acquaintance, however."

"And the mother?"

"Oh, she looked distressed, told the child she was very impolite, and that it was not right to entertain such thoughts of revenge—that it was very unlady-like and un-Christian. Said that vengeance belonged to a higher power, and that sort of thing."

"Real good old lady, is she?" chuckled the other.

"Not exactly. Not too good. Calm, motherly person; but not so old, either. Less than thirty, apparently."

"How about the photograph?"

"Luckiest 'find' in the world," replied the detective, enthusiastically. "I drop into all the leading hotels almost daily, and yesterday morning the proprietor of the Sinclair handed me this," passing a cabinet picture to the elder man, "which they had just found under the edge of the carpet when they moved the bureau. He tells me it is a good likeness of the woman I want to find, for he saw her fully while she was a guest there. Her hair looks dark in the



photo, but it was yellow at that time—bleached, probably. You see," indicating by a gesture, "there is the photographer's name and the place, San Francisco. I want to go *there*."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Very well. You have my permission, and I wish you good-luck. Ten thousand dollars isn't to be sniffed at."

"Thank you, sir," and the young man rose and turned toward the doorway.

"Here, Hicks," and the speaker had rapidly opened a little drawer, taking a small bundle therefrom, which he handed to the other. "That's what was found in Catherwood's room: torn envelopes, some bills, receipts, and a note or two. They may be of use to you. You may have this, also, if you wish to retain the 'fatal weapon,' " handing over the article. "But why are you so anxious to find the woman first?"

"Because I've partly accepted the theory of both the magistrate and the attending surgeon—that the wound was inflicted by a female hand. It's pretty fair evidence, but I would rather have one fact than a thousand theories."

"She's only one of the three suspected parties, you know."

"That's true, but I know nothing about the others. They sank from sight with remarkable quickness. I use the common principle of first come first served, and I want an explanation from this woman of the reasons of her suspicious actions and her rapid flight from the city, as soon as I can find her;" and, pick-



ing up the photograph, circular and batch of papers, he stowed them carefully in his pockets, seized his hat, made his obeisance to the other, and slipped out of the room, closing the door with the same careful consideration the ordinary clergyman shows to that part of a building's superstructure—which is symbolical, probably, of a religious and contemplative mind. At home, he inspected the collection. With the papers there was, also, a handkerchief—a delicate but not costly article. He looked at this with quiet intentness. Not a name or initial upon it, but as he held it up it exhaled a pungent perfume.

“What’s that?” he soliloquized, as he buried his nose in its crumpled folds. “What extract is that? It’s familiar to me, somehow.” And the handkerchief? It was not sufficiently fine to have been the property of a lady. It might have been a home product that the original of the photograph had brought with her from the West. Was it possible that it belonged to a servant-girl at the boarding-house? That conjecture was more probable. At least, the owner had been restricted in the price of her purchases, for this was a very common piece of goods. Was it a clew—the one he wanted?



## CHAPTER VIII.

### A FRUITLESS QUEST.

CHRISTMAS DAY of the same year saw Reuben Hicks home again, and the morning after he sat in the same chair tilted back against the same wall, with the self-same inquiring gaze fixed upon the baize-covered table that he had given that well-worn specimen of furniture six weeks before. But it was as unresponsive as ever. In a fit of melancholy, probably, he was softly whistling a tune very popular but a few years previous—a topical song known as “Walking Down Broadway.”

His nearest friends always forgave him this slight eccentricity, as he made no other pretensions to musical accomplishments, and the shrill whistle that had roused the echoes of the hills as he followed the plough-handles in the early spring, when he was a boy, was the only reminder to him of a youth who, although his *alter ego*, seemed far removed from the earnest, hard-thinking, hard-working, and steadfast man of the present. His rendition of the line relating to “the festive, gay Broadway” was interrupted by the sharp click of a latch-key. His pursed-up lips relaxed, the face became mobile as the inspector entered breezily. The latter was in excellent good-humor for the nonce, as “business” had been brisk lately and he felt a joyous personal satisfaction in the natty suit, with heavy fur-lined



overcoat, in which he was newly dressed. His greeting was cordial as he shook hands with the younger man.

"Glad to see you back. Have much luck?"

"Only fair."

"Tell me about it. Wait a moment," seizing the poker to stir up the coal, burning dimly in the open grate, "till I get a little more fire here. Cold, but good, seasonable weather. Now," turning to hang his discarded overcoat and hat in the wardrobe, "I'm all attention. Rattle on."

"I reached 'Frisco all right," slightly drawled the other, just a faint nasal intonation being discernible in his voice—no more so, however, than is frequently heard among both the whites and negroes of southeastern Virginia, along the tidewater counties—"and though the photograph-maker had moved, I soon found him in another street, and I obtained some facts from him."

"What were they?" inquired the listener with every sort of interest.

"He knew Catherwood quite well, but never saw the young woman only at the time she sat for the cabinet. She was sent there by the old fellow himself. But he directed me to a man, and that man referred me to another, and after interviewing half a dozen people, gathering various bits of information, my search took me off to a town about sixty miles away in the northern part of the State. There I heard the whole story. Her mother was an actress, well known all over the country. Played here in New York. You remember her—Mademoiselle Sylphide, she called herself."



The other nodded his head briskly in the affirmative with a quiet ejaculation of "Umph." He had a distinct recollection of the cost of a basket of champagne that he had laid as an offering at this siren's feet in his salad-days, and he was old enough then to have been ashamed of himself. There was a pair of white cotton gloves he still cherished as a *gage-d'amour*, among the other effects of his *escritoire* at home. Know her? Well, rather; but he did not feel inclined to make any confidences. His lips were closed. Hicks saw the faint color rising to the other man's cheeks, and formed his own opinion of the reason.

"The Sylphide ran down at the heels, after a particularly big scandal in Chicago with a grain speculator—a married man—and drifted farther West. She took to drink, and when she died, ten years ago, was about on a par with the women in our concert saloons." (Another vivacious nod of the bald head of his listener.) "She lost her voice, and then her beauty, and that was the end of her career. Her real name, it seems, was Wagner, and the girl of twelve she left behind was taken in charge by some charitably disposed people who gave her a home until she was eighteen, and then sent her out to combat with the world—make her own living, is the stereotyped phrase, I believe. I imagine she had some of the qualities of her mother, and her guardians did not care to keep her longer. She became a waitress in a hotel—quite an attraction, every one said; and soon after a rancher and cattle-driver, on a small scale, fell in love with her and they were married. She seemed to settle down sensibly, al-



though there had been some stories about her, and there were rumors she had outside admirers. But people *will* lie the world over. There's little doubt but what there was plenty of connubial felicity till Jabez Catherwood stumbled upon her accidentally, and made her acquaintance in the summer of last year. He had known her mother forty odd years ago, and he took a sudden fancy to the daughter of his boyish acquaintance. Catherwood had suffered many unpleasant experiences; but a few months before he met this offspring of his old school companion he had secured control of a mine, and it proved to be a bonanza. The cow-boy husband was from home a good portion of the time, but he made his wife explain the source of the costly jewelry and rich dresses she was wearing, and she acted very honestly with him, apparently, introducing him to Catherwood, and accounting for the presents on the score of his being a life-long friend of her mother and the fatherly affection of the mine-owner. No one out there seems to exactly understand it, but the old chap must have offered her some great inducement; for she left suddenly with him for the East, and we know the rest. I wonder what became of all that money, though," soliloquized the detective, who had evidently lost interest in the thread of his own narrative, lapsing into one of his habitual musing moods.

"Why this *is* exciting, Hicks! But don't sit there, mumbling. Go on with the story."

The detective shook himself, as if he had been aroused from a nap. There was a slight irritation of manner as he continued: "She went straight back



from here to her husband," and he uncrossed his legs, stretching them out before him as he glared at vacancy.

"SHE DID!" exclaimed the elder man, bouncing from his chair. "*Do you mean to tell me that woman went right from here to San Francisco?*" and slowly sinking into his seat, he scratched his head, as if seeking for the nerve that would transmit an explanation to his perturbed brain of this strange, inconsistent action in a suspected murderess.

"That is the fact," was the cool rejoinder.

"Well, it beats the Dutch! I can hardly believe it! How do *you* account for it?"

"Easy enough. She's not guilty; that's all."

"How? You're easily satisfied, it seems to me. But go on."

"She returned to her husband—he came pretty near killing her when they met—and claimed to have left a note behind making full explanation of her seeming reprehensible conduct. He didn't find the message, at least. She vowed she had done nothing wrong, and that she only accompanied the old man—who at last she acknowledged was grossly in love with her—for the purpose of obtaining a large sum of money he had promised her if she would take the trip. I believe the woman told the truth. She talked too much for one who has any guilty secret to hide. Half the community there know what I'm telling you. Catherwood thought that the scandal would drive her to his arms; but she had a lot of worldly wisdom, and only pretended anything you please for the sake of getting the cash from him. Regular cheat on her part, of course; but she never



made any pretensions to holiness. Her acts proved her love for her husband. From different sources I learned that she bought up a good business for him; and at different times gave him checks for two, three, and I saw one stub marked for five, thousand dollars. But he was never satisfied of the woman's honesty. He condoned the possible offence—the infringement of his marital rights; but he had evidently been earnestly in love with her, and with morose grieving over her escapade he took to drink to drown sad memories, I suppose, squandering large sums of money in excesses of the worst kind. Before that time he had been an energetic, hard-working man, and every one gave him the best character. Finally, her money was nearly gone, and when she was unable or unwilling to give him more he beat her; but his career of dissipation was short, for he fell out of a wagon and broke his neck about three months after her return. She sank out of notice at once. Raised a few hundred dollars from the sale of her personal effects and household goods, and left the town. The mayor of the place told me there must have been \$20,000, at least, lost in connection with the store she set up for him, as he had given everybody unlimited credit. Her husband was the greatest freak they had ever seen. He gave orders one day that all the saloons should be kept open at his expense, and the next morning he paid the bills, amounting to over \$1,300. All sorts of wild tales were told about him. If he had lived East, he would have been put in an insane asylum. As she had only been gone a few weeks before I reached there, it was easy to trace her as far as Denver.



There the police said it was believed she had left for St. Louis, and it was their opinion she had a large amount of money with her. At one of the banks she had changed a thousand-dollar bill. It's my belief that when she saw what a wreck of things her husband was making, she retained a snug sum in her pocket. My time was up, and I had to come home, but I'm going to find *that* woman."

"You'll do it, too, Reuben, my boy," and the chief spoke kindly, as, rising from his chair, he walked across the room and laid his hand on the shoulder of the other. "I want to see you earn that reward, for you deserve it, and it makes me feel ashamed that we made such a mess of it at the outset. Let's see," with an affected air of searching his memory; "when did this thing occur? Ah, yes, in June—more than six months ago."

"One thing about the case puzzles me greatly."

"What's that?"

"What became of the million dollars that Catherwood received for his half-share of the mine. The sum may be exaggerated, as I had no time to verify the amount of the sale; but the photographer, who has a practical knowledge of such properties, told me it was probably true, and there wasn't the slightest doubt but what he must have received at least half that sum in cool cash. The bonds, securities, etc., found in Catherwood's valise only counted up about \$300,000, and this woman could not have had a colossal fortune in her hands. The best I can make out, though her husband let money flow like water, is that she had nearly \$35,000. Even if she retained ten or twenty thousand more, what has become of



all those other hundred thousands? Somewhere, there is a half million; where is it?"

The listener shook his head dubiously, expressive of his utter inability to offer a suggestion.

"I don't believe she knows anything about it, either, for I'm certain she's not the 'right catch' for me. With her Western training there is some bravado about her, of course, but nothing in her whole conduct indicates any fear of detection. Not a step she has taken leaves any supposition that she has committed a crime. She is described as grief-stricken in appearance. So-called bad women have frequently very tender hearts, I know. Who is the man with the 'severe face,' and what was the peddler doing in Catherwood's room? Do you know what's to be done?" and without waiting for a response to the question he continued energetically, "I'm going to find those men, and I shall commence right at the start, just as the magistrate did."

"First——"

"Yes," interrupted the detective, "I intend to hunt up the servant-girl who opened the door to those parties. There weren't enough facts developed. One great trouble is that the widow Catherwood has, in my opinion, appeared altogether too indifferent as to the results. I guess she was glad to obtain the fortune she did without worrying over the lost money. But lost money is good when it's found."

"Quite true, Hicks," responded the head of the department. "By the way, didn't the people of that town know of Catherwood's death?"

"It seems not. He was a comparative stranger there, and only visited at this woman's home. He



passed his time either in 'Frisco or at the mine. They don't see any important newspapers there, and it's not a reading community, anyway. It was a general supposition that she had only gone a short distance with Catherwood; and, if you remember, there wasn't the slightest reference to any woman in our city reports of the case."

"Yes, that's so. As I told you before, I wish you every success. The whole affair is as interesting as a novel; but just now I want you to look at this," and a moment later they were in deep consultation over the possibilities of a late destructive fire with strong corroborative evidence in connection, being the usual Jew incendiary method of disposing of a stock of unsalable goods. This class of beings evidently know their brethren, for there has never been an insurance company managed by their own race. It is the Gentile upon whom the swindle is invariably inflicted.



## BOOK II.—ABROAD.

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### CHAPTER IX.

#### PERSONAL AMENITIES.

IT was the Centennial year. On the morrow, May 10, the great Exposition would throw open its doors with formal ceremonies. A tap on a knob, and that monster, the Corliss engine, would be set in motion. Guns would fire and the people would shout. All the notabilities of the nation were to be present. It was to be a gala-day. Hundreds of New Yorkers, although they gibed at the quietness of the Quaker City, and indulged in moth-eaten jests of its grassy streets and sleepy horse (street) cars, envious of the position Philadelphia would hold in the world's eyes for six months to come, had signified their intention of "going over" to take part in the preliminary exercises—out of pure charity, they said—of what has, up to the present, been the grandest lawn *fête* ever held.

Mrs. Catherwood, who was now to a considerable degree a woman of fashion, and who with ever-constant growing happiness exhibited a much livelier mood than of yore, though her manner was statelier, had arranged to visit the exhibition in company with her daughter, who until this time had remained al-



most constantly in the school-room and had seen little of the outside world except in the travel of brief summer excursions. The mother had carefully supervised her child's mental needs, changing teachers when necessary with a firm determination that was quite shocking to the weak minds of stupid instructors and very dispiriting to the nerves of tea-drinking governesses.

Until her fourteenth year, Miss Nellie had attended the public schools, but since then her education had been under the control of select teachers, male and female. The mother had insisted upon securing the services of specialists, and the round-shouldered individual who taught the daughter French was a native of Dijon and had lived in Paris. The instructor in music was a veritable professor, whose compositions had been highly extolled; and the lady who trained her to express herself in good English, and drilled her in the sciences, was the writer of one or more successful text-books on language, physics, and biology. There had been engaged, at times, some incompetents; but Mrs. Catherwood soon discovered their superficiality of knowledge, both of the subject and of the ability to teach it, and gave them their *congé* with but little hesitation. Such effrontery was amazing, she declared. "I want Nellie to be taught by people who know thoroughly what they profess. If I only desired to have her obtain a smattering of the 'ologies, I could teach her myself," she had remarked to a near acquaintance—all of which was indicative of a radical nature, but of decisiveness of character. And the daughter had not unwillingly accepted these conditions, for she was very apt, pos-



sessed an inquiring mind and a strong imagination, with a natural inclination for books and a love of study. Still, she could not suppress a little murmur of delight when told that, for a few days, in this beautiful spring weather, her lessons would be discontinued.

Edwin Austin, who was conducting a successful drug-store—an old-established house—on Broadway with his father, and who was at the same time preparing for a medical career, having entered upon the course of study the fall after his graduation from a college of pharmacy, would accompany the party. He had made the acquaintance of Harrod professionally some time before; later they had become quite intimate, and the lawyer, satisfying himself of the excellent qualities of the young man, who was then about twenty-four years old, had gradually introduced him into the fireside companionship of the Catherwoods. The druggist had become a desirable acquisition to their list of friends, and to one of the family, at least, although his calls had not been frequent, he was a very welcome visitor. Miss Nellie, thoroughly engrossed in her recitations and the various feminine accomplishments to be derived by an attentive perusal of the arts and *belles-lettres*, was now in her seventeenth year, and so was sufficiently old to appreciate the dark curly hair and smiling brown eyes of the young gentleman who possessed such delightful manners, and who treated her with such charming deference. It was the old, old story of love's young dream, though Mrs. Catherwood, mindful of her own sad experience, would not allow any demonstration or give Mr. Austin the opportunity of expressing any



stronger emotion for her daughter than that of ordinary friendship.

And the studious girl was well worthy of a man's respect and affection. During the past three years, she had developed from a tall, angular child of seeming fragile constitution into a well-matured young woman with full, rounded body, a creature of health and graceful activity. Her mother was never able to conceal her surprise at the fact that the daughter was "so much larger than I was at her age."

Nellie's lovely blonde hair, that hung in wavy strands looking like spun gold, and the large dark-blue eyes of melting tenderness, were both inheritances from the father, modified and amplified by female refinement. Her complexion, which was Nature's gift, was an allurement—an ever-changing mixture of cream and rose-tints. The delicate hands and feet were models from the mother, as was the pliant suppleness of her figure. The memory of a parent, lost to her under such hideous circumstances, had grown to be an inspiring passion. She knew nothing of his faults and weaknesses; only the fact that he had been cruelly murdered, without any one being punished for the crime, was the sole heritage left her. Her mother's injudicious and frequent comment, that she resembled her father, aided in strengthening the unhealthy craving that the drama of their lives should have a proper *finale* by the discovery and execution of the guilty one. This "constant, burning thought" she had communicated, first to the mother, who seemed distressed by this craving for blood on the part of her child, and had chided her severely for entertaining such ideas; and then to



the young apothecary, after they had been long acquainted.

Desirous of being of service to her, he had expressed interest, and she found in him the promise of a willing coadjutor in her plans. When Mr. Harrod became an inmate of their household, she had, as a child, only shown indifference toward the "strange man;" but in the last year or two, strange to relate, she had conceived a strong dislike for him, and though he had been both helpful and considerate, she was unwilling to hide from those about her the aversion she felt for this long-time boarder. Possibly the fear of having a step-father may have influenced her, for the increased confidential relations of the other two were quite perceptible to many of the family acquaintances. Austin had seen it, and was not displeased, for he admired this lawyer friend, and was jealously inclined to think that even a girl so young as beautiful Helen might be flattered by the attentions of a man barely more than thirty, who possessed a fascinating address, and had already made a prominent name for himself in the legal profession. The days of forensic eloquence have not all passed away, and not unfrequently his pleas before juries were masterpieces of logic and brilliancy.

Harrod was never able to explain it, for he believed his heart buried in the watery tomb with the fair young girl who had been so cruelly taken from him; but, moved by the sympathetic kindness of Mrs. Catherwood, he had but a month before caught himself holding the charming and buxom widow in his arms, telling her of his affection, she listening with greedy ears for the long-delayed declaration,



while Harrod heard her whisper tremulous words in which she told him that she had loved him for years.

"But I fear I am too old for you," she had sighed, while clinging to him and resting her rosy face against his arm.

"That's gross flattery, dear. I look the oldest"—which was really the fact—"and I'm sure I feel much older than I look. But neither of us is too old to know some joy in this world. We have both lost——"

"Ah, yes, John; but you are my first love. I never knew what love was till you stirred my heart. And I can help you now as I could not before. You are ambitious, and I shall be so for your sake. You shall be a judge, and go to the Supreme Court of the United States. If money will make you President, you shall go to the White House, for you're smart enough to wield a nation's destinies. Kiss me, John."

He bent his head to feel her warm mouth pressed tightly against his. "Dearest," he replied, his pulses beating with the strange languor of passion this woman aroused in him, and with just a little regret that he was throwing aside the fealty he owed to one gone before, "I could not let you spend a cent of your money for my advancement. That must come from my own unaided efforts. But you are right in saying I am ambitious, and I shall strive the harder now to reach a position of the highest honor." The man's eyes glowed with the thought of the brilliant future he should attempt to attain. He could in fancy see the hand of fate beckoning him on to glory and renown.

"You will do it, darling," uttering the term of



endearment with all the confusion of a school-girl. "You are a king among men. All I have is yours. My life belongs to you. Love me, John, for I've been starving for years," and pulling his head down to her she did not wait, but kissed him on the lips again and again, as if her soul had awakened to a new joy. The glance of her eye, the throbbing of her breast, the passion sent through her moist mouth to his, was like an intoxicant, and the strong-headed man was amazed at the revelation—at the tropical nature of her overpowering love for him.

Yet an hour later there was the same docile calmness of demeanor, the usual quiet expression in her face, but to which was added seemingly a new sparkle in the eyes and a brighter sheen to the chestnut hair as she presided at the dinner-table, her fingers caressing the cup-handles with more than the usual vigor.

Why should he not accept the gifts the gods sent? She was lovely in mind and person, independently rich, rising in social status, and she had set him on a pedestal for adoration.

The next day it was arranged in a brief conversation they held in the parlor—where the widow, coloring with the roseate hue of her delicious thoughts as they discussed the details of their future life, and when she was, as she told him, "too happy to think"—that their engagement should be announced privately to a few friends some time later; and now it had been decided that the day after their return from Philadelphia should be the date of the auspicious event.



The daughter, usually free from all symptoms of ill-humor, had been forced to notice the exceedingly pleasant confidences that had lately existed between the older parties, and the night before they started on their trip had remarked to Mr. Austin in a half-sneering tone that was an injustice to her natural sweet demeanor: "I believe that horrid man is making love to mamma. I should hate him if she were so weak as to marry him."

"And why shouldn't she?" inquired the other. "Really, Miss Nellie, your prejudice against Mr. Harrod is unreasonable. I think he is a remarkably brilliant man, and his character is above reproach. To tell you the truth—and you mustn't misunderstand me, for your mother is a very charming woman—I should imagine he could marry almost any young girl he wanted. There are lots of them on the avenue that don't hide their admiration for him, and I know one or two who have said they would set their caps for him if given half a chance." (And your mother ought to jump for joy, if she can get him, was his mental cogitation.)

"I only wish some of them would catch him, then," she retorted half angrily, making a little spiteful *moue*. "Why, he's old enough to be their father."

"Not unless he had married at ten or twelve," was the ungraceful response.

"I don't care, anyway. I don't like him, and I can't help it"—with which woman's reason she evidenced a desire to close the conversation on the subject. But she couldn't resist one more importunity, and she ejaculated hastily, "Harrod! What



a name! It ought to be 'horrid,' for that's just what he is."

Mr. Austin closed his eyes for a moment and indulged in a soft whistle, with his hand covering his mouth, consoling himself with the philosophic thought that a little temper in a woman was an excellent thing—if not directed against yourself.



## CHAPTER X.

### ESTELLE WAGNER'S CONFESSION.

"GOING over to the quiet city, Quakerville?" inquired the chief of detectives with an air of jocoseness, as Hicks was about leaving the office on the evening of May 9. His little jokes were always heralded by a broad smile, which gave timely notice of the intention to perpetrate a pun or to indulge in some witticism. "I think we'll be free of the light-fingered gentry for some time."

"Yes," responded the other, "I shall take an early morning train; "there may be something for me to do. Fact is, there *is* something. I've just obtained the address of the Irish girl. Got it last week."

"What—the one in the Catherwood matter?" asked the burly man with a show of interest. Hicks nodded assent.

"Why, that case is three years old. But you're a plucky one."

"It won't wear out with me till it's thirty years old. I have a strange infatuation for it, and I'm going to solve the problem. Have done nothing but conjecture so far. Yes, I ran across the domestic. She's been living secluded in Boston with a brother for some time. Has a beau there, I think. Lately they all moved to Philadelphia, and she's in service again. Perhaps that's the reason I didn't find her



before. The boarding-mistress, Mrs. Pentricks, is dead. From time to time I've interviewed several of the people that boarded on Ninth Street, but they couldn't tell me anything about the servants."

"How did you find her?"

"Easily enough. Have had her name scanned for at every intelligence office of any standing in the country. She always gives it in full—Lulu Bridget Martin—and when she applied for a situation in Philadelphia word was sent to me at once. The address was all right, and I found her without trouble. She seems to be brighter mentally than she was at the time of the murder, and I made her give me a better description of the people who called. It seems the two men and the woman all came after five o'clock, and possibly all within an hour's time. It gives me a definite basis on one thing."

"What's that?"

"That Catherwood was killed between five and seven o'clock."

"And, of course, one of the three killed him."

"Not necessarily."

"Why not? I thought that was your theory all along."

"Generally so, perhaps; for of course I must find these three people first. But the magistrate who held the inquiry is a very keen man, and he told me it was just as probable that the boarding-house keeper or this servant committed the crime as any other."

"Fiddlesticks! You surely don't believe such guff as that."

The chief was a coarse, uneducated man, whom influence, or what the ward politician now designates



as "a pull," had raised to his present position, after which his assiduity and constant attention to duty kept him firmly fixed there.

"I don't say I did; but I am willing to listen to the opinions of any wise man. Sometimes I think I haven't the slightest clew. But I'll see you later. Good-day, sir," and he instantly whisked through the doorway in his noiseless manner.

"Strange fellow," muttered the occupant of the room. "Either he is so thoroughly perplexed that he won't acknowledge it, or he has some scheme that he won't tell. I like his grit, though, and he's as smart as tacks," with which commendation the worthy official sank back into somnolent thought.

. . . . .

It was nearly eight weeks later—just after the private citizen had gained control of his normal condition, and the reverberations of fire-crackers, guns, and cannon were about dying away on his sense of hearing; when ordinary quiet had succeeded the pandemonium of a Fourth of July for which every patriotic son of America returns grateful thanks that it only comes as an annual infliction—that Hicks appeared about noon at the open doorway of the inner office, now bright in its new dress of a brilliant-colored matting and gaudy furniture covers in cretonne. His imperturbable glance coolly rested upon the crowd within, but his face was slightly colored with a flush that might be the result of too much exercise under a hot sun, though there was a savage glisten in his eye as he communicated, in pantomime, his desire to have a private conclave with his superior, whose look he caught as he stood upon the threshold. Saluting his



*confrères*, some of whom stood in stolid silence receiving instructions, while others lounged about in Mi-cawber-like attitudes, waiting for something to turn up, he passed into an ante-room, followed by the chief, who locked the door after him. Hicks spoke in a voice of mild triumph.

"I have scored one success. Three years' delay in finding out one fact! The woman was innocent, as I always believed. Read that, please," handing the other a MS. of some bulk, on letter-paper, upon which the detective had written: "The Confession of Stella Wagner."

"How did you get this, and what does it mean?" inquired the man, holding the roll of paper. He was greatly excited.

"Going the rounds of Chestnut and Race street halls, about a week after I went over, I entered a saloon, where a peculiarly sweet voice had attracted my attention, and saw a woman with a strange, grieved expression, quite out of place with her surroundings, who was entertaining the noisy crowd with some lively songs. I at once got acquainted with her, for it seemed at once that I saw a likeness to the photograph I've always carried here," tapping his inner-side coat pocket. "Although she appeared to be forty, I soon discovered that she was not the least bit vicious. She lived at her home, a scantily furnished room on Fourth Street. It wasn't easy to get on friendly terms with her, for she didn't want any attentions and wouldn't receive any favors from a man, although she drank very hard—or, rather, easy enough for her. Gradually we became acquainted, and then she allowed me to walk home with her.



She told me that gin and whiskey helped her to get through her evening's entertainment, buoyed up her spirits, and retarded the progress of the disease, she thought, for she was then in the last stages of consumption. I heard the keeper of the casino remark, one evening when she was absent, that she was probably home drunk, and learned from him that she had been there more than a year as an actress. She was quite *chic* and piquant when she first came, he said, but had broken down in health; and as she would do nothing but sing, refusing to make any attempt to attract customers, and really bought her own liquor, the proprietor, an original countryman from Virginia, was not satisfied with the conditions.

"‘She had a purty voice, and was a stunnin’ figger when she come hyar,’ he swore, in a blustering way, but she had lost her good looks, ‘couldn’t dance worth a cent,’ and was breaking down rapidly. He expected to ‘get shut of her soon.’ One way and another, I was soon recognized by her as a good fellow. She wouldn’t allow any love-making; said she was ‘sick of it;’ that I was like a brother to her, etc. It took time to become so intimate, of course.”

The other nodded sagely.

"I had the Irish servant posted by her door one afternoon—for I had ascertained her hours of coming and going—and Lulu Bridget had a good look at the vocalist; but my spy couldn’t say for certain that she recognized the woman. Too great a change, I suppose. I sent for the hotel man over here, but didn’t hear from him.”

"He went to Florida for his health, a month ago,”



remarked the chief, stretching himself lazily. This was a long story Hicks was telling, and he wanted to yawn.

"Ah, I didn't know. This woman wasn't a bit fast, and only seemed to like to know some one she could call friend. Told me one night on her way home that she didn't have a hope in the world, but I couldn't make her say a word about her past life. She was down on 'the boards' as Sadie Milton, but she had a perfect right to a *nom de théâtre*, and that meant nothing to me. It was very plain that her race was about run, and I began to think of some expedient to force the history of her doings from her. I failed to see her for three nights in succession, and then I went to her house, and lucky it was I did so. She was dying when I reached her side. Her face showed more the marks of refinement and beauty at that time, though they were both pretty well obliterated; but her resemblance to the cabinet was striking. I was sure of her now. A doctor had just left before I entered, and there was some old woman giving her half-attendance. I bent toward her and asked how she was feeling. 'Better than for years,' was her answer. 'I'm going, and I'm glad of it.' 'Won't you tell me your real name?' I asked, again, knowing that in death she would tell the truth. 'Certainly. It's Estelle Wagner. Stella, they called me. Do you know, I believe you're a detect. It don't matter. Here, take this,' and her voice was sinking rapidly as she ran her arm under the pillow. Pulling out that," motioning to the paper roll held by the chief, "she gave it to me. 'It's a diary, and the solid truth,' she gasped as she fell back. She



died very peacefully a few minutes later, after muttering, 'At rest, thank God.'

"Some of her associates paid for the funeral, and the head-board to her grave has the right name marked on it. She had been a generous creature, and there were a good many tears shed as they lowered her into the ground. Now, read that," and the detective, quite out of breath, crossed his legs and began carefully nursing his knee. His voice had a faint huskiness in it as he finished. There was a suspicion of a weakness in his eyes.

The chief slowly unrolled the paper. He was nothing if not deliberate. It was really wonderful how this man, Hicks, was burrowing into this affair, stumbling on evidence, even if by accident, and he could not help admiring the crab-like tenacity with which he clung to the mysterious case. He read slowly. The MS. commenced by stating that she wanted the world to know her true story. She told of her birth, the incidents of her early life, her mother's death, her marriage to Dick Wells, and then her going away with Jabez Catherwood. The language was commonplace, at times coarse; but the writing was plain, and she had evidently related her entire experiences as she felt them. Occasionally some Western slang had been erased, and a more reputable Eastern phraseology inserted in its place.

"I didn't care a snap for the old duffer," she wrote. "He had promised me a large sum of money if I would go to New York with him. He talked constantly of his admiration for my ma; but I understood his game. I tried hard to let him believe I was dead



in love with him, for I wanted awfully to finger some of his cash. (Dick was only making a fair living for us two.) He gave me clothes and diamonds, but he wouldn't pass over a tenner unless I would go with him. He was shrewd enough to know if I got hold of his pile I'd give him the slip. Dick was away at that time, and as I thought I could explain it all to him I let the old fellow take me in charge. It was a regular lark. As soon as we reached New York, I made him keep his promise, and the morning after he came to the hotel where I was stopping—I don't remember the name—and gave me \$40,000 in good new bills. That paid me for all the trouble I'd taken. I ought to have dug out right then, but he hinted he would give me more, and was going to take me to the theatre that night. He drank a little sometimes, and I knew if he got boozy he would be generous to me. I thought twenty-four hours more wouldn't hurt, and if I could get him in a good humor by a little coaxing and flattery—for he was crazy after me—I might be able to pull another good sum of money out of his pocket. There's where I made my mistake. He didn't come at the time he promised, and as I had driven by his boarding-house that afternoon I knew how to locate him. It was only about three squares from the hotel. He told me it was a little room on the second story front, and that was easy to find, anyway; so I told the servant when she let me in I would run up alone. The girl stared at me, but I kept my veil over my face. I rushed up, pushed open the door, and saw him lying on the lounge. I thought right off he was taking a nap, for he was a sleepy old chap; but the gas was



lighted, and I saw his white staring eyes and the knife I had given him for a present stuck in him. It was all I could do to keep from screaming. He was horrible looking, and I was scart nearly to death. The blood had streamed all over his big white shirt. Then I worried about that knife a cow-boy had given me. Would they think I had stabbed him? But no one knew it was my knife. I kicked round a lot of loose papers on the floor, but I wouldn't have touched anything belonging to him for the world. I flew back to the hotel. There wasn't a person saw me going out, though I shut his door with a slam, for I heard a clicking sort of noise as I went down the stairs—in a hurry, I tell you. I've often wondered how he was killed—whether he did it himself, or was it some one else's doings. I never heard of any one being down on him. But I wasn't a-going to talk.

“I went back to Dick pell-mell, as fast as the cars would carry me, thinking how happy we'd be with the money; but he wouldn't listen to me. He said I'd been a bad woman and ruined his life. He was willing to spend the money, though; but it did prove his ruin. When he abused me I didn't mind, for I loved him truly, and when he died it broke my heart. He never believed I was all right. Then I came to Denver and to Chicago, where my baby-boy was born. He looked just like Dick. I had kept back about \$8,000, and I was all right for cash; but the fit was on me to spend, and I bought everything. Commenced drinking, too, to keep from thinking. Then I traveled down to New Orleans, and came up North again as far as Philadelphia. Some of my money, in a trunk, was lost, and so I had to begin



singing and dancing in saloons to get bread; but I'm going fast. Baby died here, and then I wanted to die. Whoever reads this will know it is the truth—so help me God. ESTELLE WAGNER WELLS."

"It's possible," said the reader, as he refolded the MS. and handed it to Hicks.

"Yes, more than that. It's probable, and I believe it's true. It simply forces upon me——"

"What?"

"The necessity of looking for those two men," and rising from his chair the detective signified that the conference was ended.

"When do you think you'll find them?"

"Before *they're* dead, I hope," softly replied Reuben, as he opened the door.



## CHAPTER XI.

### DISSENSIONS.

TIME wings its flight, and it is now the fall of 1879. The elevated roads have all been leased to the Manhattan Railway Company, and this gigantic monopoly, with its hideous structures, its dust and its racket, is in full control. The Brooklyn Bridge is no longer a wonder. Bartholdi's Statue is yet to find a position on Bedloe's Island. Crime and misery do not lessen, but there is a constant birth of joy and hope. Life repeats and mirth and sorrow go hand in hand.

Mrs. Catherwood has been Mrs. Harrod for three years, and they have been years of peaceful love, bringing prosperity to both her and her husband. He has become wonderfully famous. As a criminal lawyer he stands pre-eminent. Judges listen to his pleas with deferential attention, and juries are entranced by the flights of his impassioned oratory. His movements are chronicled in the daily press, and his *alma mater* has proudly conferred degrees upon him. He is an honorary member of so many historical, scientific and public societies that he could hardly enumerate the list. It would be tiresome to give them. Political appointments have been thrust upon him; he has been solicited to accept a high Gov-



ernment office; but he has been obliged to decline all from lack of time to give personal attention to the attendant duties. The supervision of his wide-spreading legal business has become an onerous tax, and he has not been given an opportunity to take a day's outing for two years past. The legal firm of Harrod, Haynes & Co. is as well known as any corporation of law luminaries—for he has united with him two partners, men of special talent in their respective fields of jurisprudence.

To his wife, in the glory of her family standing and social success, there have come minor annoyances, one of them being the loss of the society of her husband, whose business engagements keep him almost entirely from her side. But her daughter is soon to enter into a marriage alliance that is really very satisfactory to the growing desires of the mother to be classed among "the smart set"—that band only slightly inferior in number to those whom Tennyson immortalized for their heroic, blundering deed at Balaklava—the noble four hundred. (But lately reduced to one hundred and fifty.)

Mr. Austin's father had died the year before, leaving nearly half a million dollars to his "dear boy," and an ample fortune to each of the young man's sisters, whose position was considered impregnable. By this union Mrs. Harrod's daughter would become a member of an exclusive *coterie*, and this refulgence must be largely reflected on herself. It would be only a gentle light, perhaps; but her heart's yearnings would be satisfied. From Washington Market to Murray Hill was a great step in one's lifetime.

The Misses Austin were delighted with Helen, and



already gave her a part of the sisterly affection they had always bestowed upon the brother of whom they were so proud, to whom they were so fondly devoted; for, in the language of an acquaintance, "the drug-store was a gold mine." His practice was among the *élite*—though he would willingly have gone into an East-side tenement house if his services had been asked—and he had a great reputation as a club man, yachtsman and athlete. "A good, sensible family all around, but very swell," was the accepted commendation.

The young ladies made their own summer dresses of Swiss mull and lawn for *négligé* indoor costume, could trim their own hats with dainty grace, and the dignified, precise mother saved the lace of bygone days and discoursed upon the lack of courtesy in the present age. And Edwin was so intensely popular, everybody said. Really, the three charming demoiselles sometimes bored people terribly with a recapitulation of their dear brother's many virtues and accomplishments. In spite of it all, he was not the least bit spoiled, and was in reality a fine young fellow of average ability.

Mrs. Harrod's own rapidly increasing wealth—for the mine dividends had been immense, varying from twenty-five to forty per cent. annually—had led her to assume many of the responsibilities and much of the exclusiveness of her neighbors since her second removal to Madison Avenue; and the proud position of her husband, whose name was now being mentioned as a possible candidate for political preference and honors, had caused her to affect a demeanor quite foreign to the calm repose of the wife and



widow of the ex-grocery merchant and mine-owner of six years before.

It was not an improvement, either. She was gaining in *embonpoint*, and in the opinion of some of her friends was aging more rapidly than would be expected from a woman who had hitherto maintained a youthful appearance. There was no manifest inconsistency in her general manner; but the sudden acquisition of great wealth is liable to produce new emotions, to engender personal habits and a style of conversation quite different from those that can be assumed or maintained by people who are only in ordinary financial circumstances, and which can not even be felt by the class of unfortunates known as the poverty-stricken.

There was more *hauteur* to her bearing and less sweetness of disposition. Trivialities that had not been noticed in times past became now serious offences in her eyes; and yet those eyes were brighter than ever. She craved social excitement, and there was an artificiality to her laugh, a querulousness in her voice, and a spasmodic haste in her daily movements, that betokened restlessness, and was really unpleasant to one for whom she would have yielded up her life—her husband. But fashionable life had developed inherent nervousness, and the family physician, with that carefully prescribed policy of saying little and doing less, advised rest from all the demands of social requirements by a trip abroad.

Lawyer Harrod had never regretted this marriage; for, though it was impossible for him to reciprocate the intensity of love his wife showered upon him, he was incapable of showing else than gratitude toward



the woman who had befriended him when he was so sadly in need of sympathy. But a faint disturbing voice, a species of mental retrospection, always told him that there was the nature of a *mésalliance* in this nuptial connection. His own family's standing had been one of the best, as was proven by the fact of the hurrying crowd of notabilities who claimed friendship and sought his society as he was growing famous. But, in self-abasement, he put the unworthy thought aside. She had given him the grandest proof of a woman's generosity, and her constancy and loyalty to him was marvelous. As for society, he had had quite sufficient of the insincerity of that element. He felt but little interest in the plunges of his wife into the vortex of pleasure or her association with a giddy, time-killing crowd, many of them her mental inferiors, and nearly all of whom would drop her acquaintance with a sneer if she were to be so unfortunate as to lose her money.

Mr. Harrod was not a social success. He was simply a great man. His tastes were domestic, and in his early manhood he had pictured quite a different home-life from this present one. Mrs. Harrod could not for a moment be considered shoddy. If she insisted upon meeting in her parlors only the *crème de la crème*, it was because she looked the patrician, and knew she would not play an ignoble part at the reception of her visitors; she was quite able to compete with them in a thorough knowledge of worldly wisdom. Her dress, the appointments of her victoria, and the furnishings of her *boudoir*, were in accordance with the strictest canons of good taste. Her conversation was singularly brilliant; she was



an adept at repartee, and her conception of a hostess' duties was without a flaw. Her powers of discrimination and her infinite tact were the result of a native talent. Only, Nature had not created her for the harassing life of a woman of fashion, and she was beginning to realize this truth after some unusual strain of social duties had left her weak and dispirited. She should have created a *salon*, and made her magnificent rooms the rendezvous of the choice spirits of literature and art, but she had a horror of being thought Bohemian; and yet the light chaff and silly gossip of many of those with whom she came in contact was neither enlivening nor entertaining. The trite expressions, the well-worn phrases, the colorless converse, were the apotheosis of insipidity. Better the staid, humble life of the old home on Sixth Avenue, she often thought.

Her husband would be relieved, however, when his step-daughter was gone from the house, for she possessed an unusual flow of animal spirits, and her merry hosts of girl friends, some three or four of whom were always guests, left no opportunity for study or contemplation. Her unnatural antipathy to him had apparently grown to a venomous hatred that was very galling to his proud nature. Sure of his own innocence of any cause of offence, he made no attempt to obtain an explanation from her, and even shielded her when the exasperated mother would have sent her away permanently—as she did send her for one year to Vassar. Mrs. Harrod punished her also by curtailing her allowance of pocket-money, and had threatened to reduce her to further submission by violent means—close confinement or expa-



triation to a country village being hinted as a means. But she had not been able to break the stubborn spirit of the daughter in this respect.

Miss Nellie never noticed her step-father, or spoke to him, on any occasion. She declined to appear at the table when he was present, and avoided his company with a constant precision that caused invidious remarks to be made by the few people who became aware of her irregular behavior. Her conduct was a source of mingled amazement and worriment also to Mr. Austin. It seemed to be the one glaring defect in the lovely character of the young girl. She only explained it to herself as an illustration of the Dr. Fell theory. The marriage of her mother had been private principally on this account, and the daughter had remained at home, to the wonder of her acquaintances, crying her eyes out over what she was pleased to call "the hideous sacrifice."

Mrs. Harrod had also a *bête noir* in the person of the detective Hicks, who had almost exhausted his wondrous faculty of formulating excuses for calling upon her, and whom she had finally attempted to freeze out of her presence with the chilling statement that, if he ever brought her any reliable information of the murderer of her former husband that would lead to the conviction of the criminal she would pay him the sum of \$5,000 cash; but she did not wish to be annoyed with vague surmises upon the subject, and he must refrain from any attempt at correspondence. He had been unable to gain the reward of \$10,000 offered with the year's conditions, and she had a belief that he was as pretty thoroughly incompetent as men of his ilk are supposed to be.



Ever since she had noticed him in Philadelphia, during the fortnight they passed there visiting the Exposition, it appeared to her nervous fancies as if the man was "shadowing" her husband—she had seen this expression in the newspapers—for she had noticed him watching Mr. Harrod keenly at different times and places. Apparently he was ubiquitous. Was it possible Hicks knew that her husband had been in that fatal room on Ninth Street? She shuddered at the thought of any attempt being made to fasten the crime upon her adored one. And yet the detective was strangely persistent. Since the day he had come to her with the statement of his belief that the supposed guilty woman who died three years before was innocent, she had not seen him; but she knew that he was endeavoring to discover the identity of the two men who had visited the late Mr. Catherwood about the time of that man's death. Was he trying to fasten the crime upon one of those unknown callers? Both the behavior of her daughter and the detective appeared inexplicable, although she was certain that their mutual if not combined effort presaged danger to her husband. As she was a tender, impressive woman, her life was rendered violently unhappy, at intervals, by these occurrences or imaginative reflections. But they were only slight clouds that dimmed the radiance of the sun of prosperity shining upon her and the tide of perfect happiness that swept over her in the enjoyment of the unaltering devotion of her husband. Then there was the coming marriage of her daughter, and the detective was undoubtedly as stupid as the generality of his kind. All this would probably bring



an ending to the troubles that embarrassed her, and with the thought a happier look crept over the face that had grown slightly wan and pinched in the past few months—a face that would really need cosmetics to retain its freshness before long. She did not know it, but at that very time Hicks had found the peddler, and this is how it happened.



## CHAPTER XII.

MR. SAMPSON, GENTLEMAN.

LATE in the fall of 1873, a man, short and stout, dressed in rich but gaudy apparel, made his appearance in Poughkeepsie, and after a series of consultations with the leading real-estate agents had purchased a large and one-time remunerative farm. It lay close to the suburbs, and he gradually transformed the place into a country-seat of great beauty, revolutionizing the face of nature by leveling banks, filling in gullies, smoothing the waste places, introducing gas and water pipes, and creating an artificial lake. He built a mansion that was palatial in its accoutrements, with all the accessories of a gentleman's habitation, containing an almost unnecessary number of billiard-rooms and bath-rooms leading from an open hall or court, in which a fountain splashed into a marble basin. In cages suspended from the glittering ceiling were rare birds of plumage and warbling canaries. Gorgeous chandeliers, costly paintings, magnificent furniture, and gilded decorations enhanced the beauty of this establishment, which the workmen there employed declared to be the equal of any residence in New York. This was hardly true, however. The gingerbread element prevailed. It was known that the silverware came from Tiffany's, and the carpets and curtains were said to have been imported. A short distance away



was a stable that was proportionately costly, with splendid equipages and a superior stud of horses. Adorning the grounds was every form of shrub and flower, and in their midst was a conservatory of conspicuous elegance. Along the paths and under the shade of the noble chestnut, maple, and oak trees was rare statuary, whose loveliness was accentuated at night by flashes of light from resplendent lamps. Concrete pavements and graveled and brick-laid walks led in many windings to bowers where iron chairs and tables awaited wandering lovers or contemplative student.

Though his house was appointed with serving men and women, and his stable was manned by grooms and coachman, he dwelt there alone, and lived during the winter, with the exception of one lengthened visit to the great city below, in rather splendid obscurity. Fitting himself to his new environments occupied his attention for some months. "Hartley Sampson, gentleman," was the answer he gave to the local census-gatherer when importuned for his name and occupation. There was one marked absence in the list of rooms—that of a library. 'Tis true, a small, delicately furnished room in crimson bore that appellation; but nothing of a literary character, save an occasional daily paper and some sporting journals, was to be seen on the centre-table in conjunction with a box of cigars and a general smoking-outfit. A Turkish fez and a dressing-gown hung in the wardrobe with glass doors that stood in one corner of this room.

Some of the old-time residents suddenly remembered that a certain Tom Sampson, a sort of ne'er-



do-well, had rented this farm when they were young men, and that he had a son, "Hart," who had run away from home a quarter of a century ago.

"Sure enough." "Do tell!" exclaimed the elder gossips; "that's the boy." And another voice added: "Say! He's made a fortin, and come home to enjoy it."

Then in their kindness of heart they hastened to call upon the wealthy prodigal, sure of a hearty welcome, and consumed with an anxious desire to assist him in the expenditure of so much surplus money—for he must be a veritable Monte Cristo to judge from his magnificent beginnings. They were met, however, at the front door by a footman in regal attire, who after looking them over explained in strange, fashionable, set sentences that the "marster" was engaged, or that he did not receive visitors at that hour, or he was not at home. They were never able to place foot inside the portals. And then, bewildered and humiliated, in the bitterness of their resentment they sneered at his being described as a "gentleman"—which fact the census-taker had eagerly given as a particularly funny bit of news.

"Gentleman!" snarled one bucolic individual, who sat on a keg just outside the door of an old-town grocery much frequented by the farmers. He swung his tongue, moving the quid of tobacco from one cheek to the other, and gave a petulant hitch to the cotton suspenders that held up his blue drilling overalls. "Darn him! I ain't forgit he's the son of old Tom Sampson, who wasn't worth shucks, and would have died in the poor-house ef that steer of Abe Pierson's hadn't hooked him ter death."



And his hearers, who remembered this fact, and had sundry recollections of the old man's shiftlessness, shook their heads warmly in strong condemnation of the "gentleman" and in approval of these words, with a muttered "Jest so." The sentiment of the agricultural class was strong against Hartley Sampson. The opinions of his neighbors affected that individual but little, however. What did make his life bitter, though, was the fact that but very few of the wealthy people cared to have the pleasure of his acquaintance. Only some young men whom he met casually in the billiard-rooms and at the hotel bars ever enjoyed the hospitality of his gorgeous residence, though there was a surfeit of it offered to any stray comer who represented what the new proprietor called "first-class folks."

As for the real leaders of society, the Livingstons, De Peysters, and others, as soon as they heard of his brief genealogy they did not wish to know more. He was forever outside their charmed circle. His coarseness of mind and manner, his uneducated speech, his flaring attire, had led people to recognize him as simply a boor with a pocket full of money, and his attempts to gain *entrée* into the homes of refinement and culture met with a chilling disdain that caused him to mutter many an oath at what he dubbed "their cusséd stuckupedness."

The acceptances to an intended grand ball and supper he gave, about the first of March, were so very few that he withdrew from the struggle in intense disgust, and filled his house with members of the *jeunesse dorée* and men about town, whom he beguiled into drinking his wines and holding baccha-



nalians orgies in the spacious chambers set aside for guests. Marvelous tales were told of stained velvet carpets, broken glassware, and the ruin inflicted upon costly bric-à-brac, all of which was replaced and replenished with an ungrudging hand and a careless smile by this man of gold. His indifference to the expense or price of any article desired was the one really aristocratic trait that brought him the goodwill of some who were inclined to sneer at his pretensions while accepting his invitations to make themselves at home under his roof. He was above asking advice, and too stubborn to accept it if offered with the kindest motives. If he had possessed sufficient skill to avail himself of the ideas of others, exercising the same humility he had shown when depending upon the judgment of his architect, upholsterer, and landscape gardener, he might ultimately have found grace in the eyes of those who were disposed to regard him as shoddy; but unfortunately he did not possess the art of gentlemanly appropriation, for he was utterly deficient in cleverness and tact.

Thinking that marriage would accelerate his rise to social position, he was sufficiently bold in this purpose to address a lady teacher of the city schools—a girl of rare beauty and superior accomplishments, whose dead father had been an unsuccessful merchant, but whose kinship with several of the leading families surrounded both herself and mother with affectionate regard and many refined delights. In fact, it was generally supposed that a distant relative, a crusty bachelor of some means, would leave the young lady his fortune and thus rehabilitate her



household, though he evinced but little interest in her present welfare. It was impossible for Sampson to know that her delicate lips assumed a curve of scornful wonder when the proposition was conveyed to her by means of an inelegant and badly composed communication. The stationery was *de rigueur*, but it needed only the quiet sarcasm of her declination of the proffered honor, written in the third person, to give him his quietus in the attempt of achieving worldly honors. Between gulps of fiery brandy, drained to sustain his crushed spirit after the perusal of her two-lined response, he swore his undying hate for the "hull lot and boodle of them." When he projected any more matrimonial schemes, he would marry the chambermaid, if necessary; but for the present he would have a "good time."

Thoroughly discomfited in his praiseworthy desires—for the aim to attain a position beyond one's present status is not a fit subject for jest or ridicule; it is only from such endeavors that the truly great have made themselves a component part of the world's history—he gave full scope to his gross and convivial inclinations, and Sampson Hall, as he had designated his new abode, soon became a synonym in the neighboring community for rude and boisterous revelry. He made frequent trips to New York City, where he found an abundance of congenial associations—although he peremptorily discarded every acquaintance of former years, and passed his summers at sea-side resorts of more or less repute and fashionable standing. Finally, he went to Europe and tried to "do" the Continent; but outside of English-speaking circles he found his ignorance was a stumbling-block



to his ready appreciation of the charms of travel, and after wandering about aimlessly for eight months, robbed in Naples and nearly garroted in Seville, he returned, wiser in experience and with some slight trace of polish. In his coarsely expressed dictum, New York was "the boss town—a regular hummer, and the United States was good enough" for him. As pleasure was his motive in life, the spirit of the command, *dum vivimus, vivamus*, was accepted by him as a religious creed, in the practical illustration of which he believed he was helping to drown care and make a prosy or miserable existence less "blue" for such of his fellow-mortals as came in contact with him.

But the pace was one that led to final ruin, and while he had sufficient wit to recognize the fact (for he was not brutal in his cups, and possessed a substratum of hard common sense), there was an expressed determination that he would get the good out of the most of his fortune before the end came. He was a man of ordinary instincts, of very mediocre brain-power, and in the expenditure of his money acted as much wiser people have often done—spent it extravagantly and foolishly. He was not averse to "turning an honest penny," as he said, and during his tour abroad his property had been rented at a good figure. He had also reserved to himself the profits from the sale of rare flowers and plants grown in his conservatory, thus netting a considerable income. His lack of education had been of some annoyance to him, but with only the ability to read, write, and calculate the ordinary mathematical questions of daily life, he could not conceive the value of a graded



course of study. He did engage the services of a teacher—one of those ingenious individuals who advertise to repair neglected educations—who guaranteed to make a passable scholar of him in six months, but, although he was a docile pupil, he couldn't comprehend declensions and conjugations, "couldn't get the hitch of grammar," he told his instructor. "Hain't" was the negative of "ain't" to him. He would have blushed if he had used the form "aren't," and he had no memory for dates and facts. A spelling-book and a dictionary were kept at his right hand for reference, but reading was a bore to him, and his literary progress was slow. There were also, some dollars he had invested in deportment lessons and fancy dancing; but he felt, as he expressed it, that he was only making a fool of himself, and soon threw that effort aside. Like the farmer's daughter at the seminary, the one great characteristic he lacked was ability. But he was also weak in his powers of application, and was easily discouraged. The brilliantly lighted *café*, the alluring bar-room, the seductiveness of the theatre, the coarse insipidity of the variety hall, appealed entirely to his mind and fully satisfied his senses. For them all he felt a vim and lusty appreciation, and he had had more than a five years' stretch of fun now, as he told himself about the New Year of 1879.

Since his return from foreign travel, he had become more exclusive: he had learned that that was one proper thing to do; and he associated with hardly any one when at home, keeping quite aloof from those he had previously hailed as boon companions. He could do without them, he swore beneath his



breath; some one had remarked in his presence that an oath was vulgar. His character at this time was undergoing a transition process. When he wanted to meet "some real, jolly good fellers," he could find them in 'York, and incidentally he had made the half-acquaintance of some men of prominence in his rounds. In his sober moments he would only affect the company of people who were somebody. It is probable that if his good fortune had continued he would have removed to the city permanently, united with Tammany Hall, as his political convictions were in accordance with the demands of that organization, and might have entered the field as a candidate for office. There was a heavy craving in the man's soul for advancement, and he had an assured feeling that he could become quite as intelligent an alderman or police justice as some he had seen filling those positions of trust and profit, if not of honor.

Reuben Hicks, while visiting Poughkeepsie on general business, had his attention drawn to the man as the latter was sipping a mint-julep at the hotel bar, and upon hearing little bits of Sampson's history suddenly experienced a strong desire to know more about him. The detective was subject to these impressions of clairvoyance, and always heeded their warning. Men who had, from the lowest rounds of the ladder of life, climbed up to a height that dazzled their less fortunate brethren always possessed a strong interest for him. He knew many such in the city. Securing an introduction to the wealthy ignoramus through a casual acquaintance, he began, in his shrewd method of inquiry, which did not involve asking questions, to ascertain the source of the finan-



cial strength of one whose endeavors to secure social recognition had become the standing joke of the community. But the poor boy who had run away from home and returned as a mild type of the Edmond Dantès sort (his only revenge being the purchase of a farm where his father had lived like a serf) was not a communicative person. He was not gifted with a voluble tongue, or with the power of expressing his thoughts with elegance or terseness; and he was, moreover, naturally wary and uninclined to yield much information regarding himself. His life had been one of hard work until the last few years, and he never had any opportunities for anything else. He knew New York well? Yes, had lived there at different times. His money had been derived from mining speculations, he said. His familiarity with the geography and *locale* of the far West satisfied Hicks that the man had at least known the places he mentioned with the pleasant air of *bonhomie* a man of the world would naturally assume. There was nothing uncommon in the fact of a person of Sampson's grade being able to achieve a fortune. There were many instances in the country of "nobodies" who had dug fabulous sums out of the earth or held a nation's crop of food in their grip; but the detective could not see any evidence about this one that he had ever possessed sufficient energy to account for his success. Unless he failed to read Sampson's character aright, the fellow was weak and vacillating, and did not have that stamina which will make one take twenty rebuffs before he flinches. His complete resignation to the fact that he had failed to secure a favorable acceptance of himself by



the society leaders of this town was in itself a corroborative indication. But, then, the weakest men have sometimes a fool's luck.

There was Catherwood, for instance, whose life's history he almost knew by heart. Catherwood! Why, that man was from Poughkeepsie! Did the two know each other? What a happy thought! They must have met here in their youth. But were they intimately acquainted? There was perhaps a difference of fifteen or eighteen years in the men's ages, but that would not have prevented each having knowledge of the other's existence, though they would hardly have been associates. How he would like to ask the question; but it was not expedient now.

A hasty glance at the moon-faced clock in the hotel corridor told him it was time to start for the station, as he had proposed returning at a certain hour. He would be happy to renew the acquaintance, he said to Sampson, who shook hands in farewell with all apparent cordiality, but who watched him leave with a suspicious glance in his beady, black eyes. He didn't like these persons who were "so pleased" to meet him. They probably had some intention of getting him to loosen his purse-strings, and he had begun thinking of introducing an era of economy into his affairs. One thing that had been impressed upon him during his foreign sojourn was how senseless this American fashion of pouring intoxicating beverages down your companion's throat at your own expense is. As for "treating," he was beginning to shun the custom as of useless purpose. You couldn't make a friend by any such process. Again, he wasn't anxious to extend his list of new friends.



Experience had taught him that what were known as the best people must be approached by him. There had been only a few of that class that would accept his acquaintance on any condition. What was the reason he wasn't as good as any of them? His clothes and his food cost as much, but they would not regard him as an equal. They were so insistent in this respect that he was unwillingly forced to believe they must be right. Their affability, courtesy, and perfect repose of manner awed him, and he couldn't imitate their ways with any degree of success. Still, what did the Declaration of Independence say? He shook his fist in impotent rage at the empty air, and was dispirited the rest of that day, thinking of these chaotic conditions.

But Hicks, on the contrary, was quite gleeful. He was exceedingly glad to add to the schedule of proper names held in his retentive memory that of Hartley Sampson, gentleman.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### A NIGHT'S ADVENTURE.

CONSEQUENTLY, when the sharp detective, who had not found an opportunity to revisit Poughkeepsie-on-the-Hudson, came face to face with the wealthy *parvenu* almost in front of the *Sun* building, he was delighted beyond measure, and the hearty shake of the hand with which he greeted the other was genuine; for there was no man on earth he could be more pleased to meet.

It had for years been a duty with him to stroll about City Hall Square, along Nassau Street and Park Row, past the Post Office, crossing Broadway, to look in at the Astor House, and then retrace his steps as far north as Chambers Street, coming back in front of the Mayor's office again, between five and six o'clock in the evening; for then it was that all professional and business New York turned its face homeward, and the immense throng went hurrying up-town, sweeping toward the Bowery or rushing for the surface-cars and elevated stations. It was such a vantage-ground of observation that the simplest citizen of honest intent would readily understand why a man-catcher should choose the place for a promenade at that time of day. It was a trifle past the swarm; the crowd was thinning, and the ghostly glare of the electric lights had just fallen



upon the departing rays of the dying day. Standing in the shade, Hicks had an opportunity for a brief glance only, but his mild-looking eyes had immediately recognized the features of one who had been a source of tantalizing thought to him for the past few weeks. Sampson was dressed in an ordinary suit of dark cloth donned for the occasion, and wore a heavy slouch hat instead of the usual silk tile that he kept in a condition of habitual shiningness. His gait was irregular, for he had been drinking heavily—an unusual proceeding, as a certain amount of discretion generally kept him from over-indulgence. But, giving rein to long-repressed desires, he had started out on a spree, after advisedly leaving his valuables and best clothes at the hotel where he sojourned; and after half a day's debauch he was on the borders of heavy intoxication. His naturally florid face was of a carmine hue. Hicks saw the signs, and, with lightning-like change of attitude, he assumed an air of conviviality suitable to the occasion by tipping his derby hat back on his head, gave his hair a rakish look by pulling some locks over one ear, and thrust one hand deep into his trouser's pocket as he caught his companion's arm. It was one more instance where appearances are deceitful, but his greeting was so uproarious that some sedate passers-by were greatly horrified at this display on the public streets, nervously wondering where the police were, and why they did not attend to their duty; while a half-dozen newsboys and boot-blacks, thinking they scented a chance for guying the two, and at the same time making a ready sale of their wares—if a "shine" can be included under



the head of merchandise—crowded about them. A roll of bills protruding from Sampson's vest-pocket caused one of them to herald the good news to his comrades by shouting: "Here's a bloke wid loads of de long green!" It was seldom an opportunity was given them, in their bailiwick, to realize a larger cash sum than a nickel, and this was not to be neglected. As one of the boys whispered to a friend: "These fellers wouldn't take nary change."

The country gentleman threw them half a dollar, in various bits of silver, over which there was a mighty scramble. One of the smallest "kids" seized the quarter first, and his little begrimed feet went twinkling round the corner and down Spruce Street.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Sampson. I'm just giving myself a little turn. How *are* you? And how's Pokeep? Haven't much of a load on yet, but I'm taking in the sights. Want to come along?"

'Don't care if I do," said the other, glad for the moment to see a familiar face, and feeling that in company there was security. "I'm a little that way myself," he continued with much cordiality of tone. Hicks' spontaneous outburst of confidence in telling him that wine had no terrors was very consoling to his own abased condition. He rejoiced to know that this lately formed acquaintance wasn't any better, in one respect, than himself. Vice always feels itself insulted by the presence of virtue.

"Notice my old duds," he continued with a maudlin chuckle. "There, go 'way, boys—no more change for you," and as they slowly dispersed he started on with the detective. "Got tired of the respectable life above, you know, and so have come down for



some fun. Old story to me, though," shaking his head with owl-like wisdom, as if he was thoroughly *blasé*.

The two turned down Frankfort Street at the corner of French's Hotel, the site now occupied by the *World* building, and passed on to the Bowery, entering one dram-shop after another. Hicks only moistened his lips with the various kinds of liquors, surreptitiously throwing the contents of his glass on the floor or in a spittoon when not leaving the "drink" untasted, as the opportunity occurred, while Sampson swallowed his beverages greedily. It was not the intention of the detective, however, to allow his comrade to be overcome, and so the night's entertainment was varied by a supper at one saloon, a game of cards at another, and a lunch of clam chowder in a restaurant. The gentleman from up the Hudson would not indulge in any personal confidences, although he stopped in the midst of a drunken chorus he was bellowing to thank Hicks for the proposition that they should take a ride, "just to get rid of the effects."

The detective stopped the cab at Clinton Place, on Broadway, pulled his companion out to the sidewalk, and slowly strolled down to University Place, with Sampson slightly stumbling along and clinging to his friend's arm. It was then nearly midnight. They walked up the block and casually turned down Ninth Street. Sampson had humbly acquiesced to every suggestion and movement of the other, but just now his curiosity seemed to be awakened.

"Wher—wher you're going?" he stuttered.



"Nowhere in particular. Hello! Let's cross the street. I don't like to go by that house."

"Whizzer matter?" exclaimed the drunken man, staring wildly around and reeling to and fro as he clutched at the other's arm with a maudlin grasp, and then swung himself as he held to the lamp-post at the edge of the walk.

"That's the house where my friend, Catherwood, was killed. No one lives——"

"Catherwood!" almost yelled the apparently terror-stricken man, his tones thick and harsh, but, as it appeared, suddenly awed into comparative sobriety. Then with heavy, suspicious look and manner he growled: "Sa-ay—hic. Who are you, anyhow?"

"Oh, I'm a chemist. But that reminds me. Catherwood was from your town. He was a *good* fellow. Did you know him?"

"I've seen—hic—seen him. Come, let's go 'long—hic. Sa-ay, old fel. I'll bid—hic—you good-night—hic," with an evident serious intention of getting away by himself. "I'm goin' to the—hic—hotel."

Hicks was almost in despair. He had given his voice the guttural tone of a half-drunken man, knocked a dent in his hat and disarranged his necktie, that he might be in unison with the appearance of the common chap he had been pulling around town. The small amount of whiskey he had been forced to take had given quite a ruby appearance to his face, though there had been considerable muscular exertion in half-carrying Sampson, and to all intents they were a congenial pair of night-birds, or "rounders." It was a sickening necessity to him that he must complete the programme, but now he experienced a sen-



sation of alarm lest his strategy should prove a failure. Nothing of importance had been learned—only that Sampson knew something of Catherwood. Possibly he had heard of the murder, had read the newspaper accounts, and his exclamation, rather frenzied as it was, might be only the surprise of a stupid inebriate. The man declined to answer any more questions. He was quickly getting into an unpleasant humor, and would insist upon taking his departure alone. The noisy, roistering display of good fellowship had gone, leaving only the symptoms of an ugly temper. He was armed with a revolver, for Hicks had felt the round butt of the handle in intentional search. Quite worried, he looked ahead and saw a party—a rough set—coming up the street from Sixth Avenue, and now only a few rods away. He would not let this man go to-night. His mind caught the only chance left. Under one pretext and another he delayed the departure of his unwilling associate. As the half-dozen young men, who had been making a tour of the saloons, came to the corner, spreading themselves over the sidewalk like typical toughs, indifferent to any one's welfare but their own, Hicks slightly pushed Sampson against the nearest one, sending the fellow back against the letter-box.

"What der yer mean?" he shouted, instantly assuming his *beau-idéal* of a pugilistic attitude.

"Get outer way—hic," responded Sampson.

"Out yer way! Take that, yer duffer!" and a hearty slap in the face helped to sober the staggering man.

"Did he hit you, chum?" cried the detective, ap-



parently in great rage. "No man can strike a friend of mine;" and, to prove his words, he planted a blow between the fellow's eyes that sent him sprawling in the street. Then, as the crowd rushed at him, out went his arms with wonderful swiftness and force, and the hard fists and trained muscles were brought to play on two more who went tumbling into the gutter. The fourth man he clasped round the neck with a strangler's grasp, while by a well-directed kick he rendered another *hors de combat*. All the knowledge and experience gained in youth, when he was a crack player at "shinny" and foot-ball, was now utilized, and the quondam farmer's boy was a wonderful combination of striking arms and legs with all their old-time suppleness. It was a determined, perhaps quixotic, purpose that had engaged him in this fracas; but now, thrown into a conflict where possibly his life was at stake, great fear seized upon him. Would Sampson show cowardice and fly from the scene, leaving him alone to disentangle himself from what might become a murderous affray! No. That individual, dazed but reliant, staggered back from the tall iron fence, and stood for a moment amazed and gratified at this display of heroic action in his behalf. Hicks was true blue, after all, and his suspicions were lulled. Not lacking in valor, he took part in the fight by jumping toward the two men who were now scrambling up out of the street, ready to rush in with intent to kill. He had his revolver ready for use. It was suddenly grabbed away from him at his back. Two policemen, who had been leisurely strolling up from the Brevoort House corner, discussing their servant-girl conquests, were



now on the scene. They performed some indiscriminate clubbing for a few seconds, and when tired one seized Sampson, while the other caught hold of the man that was just recovering from that first terrific knock-down blow. The latter's companions were running down the street. Many heads were to be seen at the windows of the Berkeley, and several private families in the neighborhood had been aroused.

This condition of affairs was only partly satisfactory to the detective, and in furtherance of the *rôle* he had enacted to play, he made himself so offensive in speech and action that the larger and more irate conservator of the peace, after admonishing him "to hould his tongue," at last let his prisoner go and seized upon Hicks with a personal animosity, threatening him with "a taste of the sthick" if he did not come on peacefully. It was a walk of a few blocks, and then the green lights on each side of the main entrance or "stoop" glimmered before them.

At the Mercer Street station-house, the charge was made against them both of being drunk and disorderly, with the additional one, in Sampson's case, of carrying concealed weapons. They were about to be led to different cells, when Hicks asked to be put back with his friend. The turnkey would have brusquely refused, but the coat pulled open before him showed the detective's shield pinned on the vest, and he assented with a knowing leer as he looked into the clear eyes of the man who had never been intoxicated.

"All right," he grunted assent. "I understand. It's a plant."



A thousand years' protestation of fealty could not have won such a hold upon Sampson's good-will as had this night's occurrence. A practical man, to the extent of his little wisdom, he knew the superior worth of deeds over soft promises or cajoling speech. His offensive look and bearing of a half-hour before had entirely disappeared. With the fumes of beer and vile gin still steaming his brain, he could plainly recognize that this brave man had jeopardized his own life by a strong defence from the gang that had pounced upon him—probably for the purpose of robbery, as he wore a diamond pin, of great value, which he had forgotten to remove with his other valuables. And Hicks, after fighting with massive power and cat-like agility, had even by his subsequent conduct become a sharer of this cold cell in the lock-up with him. Surely there could be no stronger test of friendship than all this. He became confidential, almost loving, in his assertions of appreciation and fidelity, as if suffering from remorse to think he could have misjudged such a magnificent man; told the *pseudo-chemist* that he would reward him for his courageous conduct, gave little biographical sketches of his past life, and spoke in drunken pomposity of his great wealth at present.

"I've been as poor as the poorest, old fel—hic," he articulated huskily, while sitting on the bench, reeling to and fro, with one arm thrown around the detective's shoulders. "Not so long ago—hic—either."

"Ever in any other biz than mining?" asked Hicks, carelessly suppressing an assumed yawn and stretching himself, although he was in a quiver of nervous



excitement, believing that he was on the verge of a great discovery.

"Mining be hanged!" growled the other. "Oh yes—hic," changing his statement with a check of drunken gravity, and peering into his companion's face, while his head wobbled in every direction. "Biz—hic—all sorts. Kept store and—hic—run on a ferry—hic—boat. Why, I peddled—hic—soap and—hic—shoe-strings in this town—hic—once."

"Humph! You were a peddler, then. When was *that*?"

"Lemmer see. 'Bout the year—hic—'bout the—hic—year;" but his mental organism was exhausted: a drunken stupor crept over him, and the head sunk down as Hicks, after repeated questionings which failed to elicit any response, let him slip gently to the floor, where he was at once fast asleep.

"About the year Catherwood was killed, I guess. I think I've caught you, my gentleman. It's a good night's work," murmured the detective, and joyously, with another look at the open mouth and the suffused features of the man who lay heavily breathing in brutish slumber, he stretched his limbs on the coarse pallet for a few hours' rest.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### FINDING THE MONEY.

THE morning's light found both men aroused from their brief sleep. Sampson had opened his bleary eyes first, for he had wonderful powers of recuperation, and he stared long and earnestly at the sleeping figure near him. Yes, it was not a dream. Hicks had done battle for him, for the man had a deep scratch on his cheek, from which blood had flowed: "Some of those fellers had clawed him;" and the sleeve of his coat was torn to the elbow.

A slight movement from Sampson, and the detective was awakened. He had once told an acquaintance that the scratching of a pin on any hard surface would arouse him from the deepest slumber, so easily did he control his physical nature.

"Heavens! how my head aches," he exclaimed, sitting up, and, in pursuance of his dramatic effort, clasping his hand above his eyes. His disordered dress and frowsy hair readily assisted, at a casual glance, the desired illusion that he "had been out with the boys." Still, his face looked remarkably clear and bright for a victim of a night's dissipation, and this excited a sneering comment from the parched lips and a bitter expression in the bloodshot orbs of Sampson.

"You don't look as ef you'd drank a drop," and



his own swollen cheek-bone, inflamed countenance, and nervous trembling of body, which he could feel, if not see, rendered the contrast between them more striking.

"I'm seasoned to it, that's all," replied Hicks, as he stroked his injured face, and with a light smile pinned together the flowing strands of his coat-sleeve. "I'm sure that fight drove all the liquor out of me," he continued, paying no attention to the implication of the other's tone.

"You're a good one, too," spoke up Sampson, his generous impulses returning as he thought of those wonderful blows in his behalf. "I kin never thank you enough. How I wish I could git a drink!" for his mouth was as stiff as card-board, and his throat longed for some inspiriting liquid. His eyes roved furtively about the cell.

"Do yer know, pard," he continued, relapsing into his former mood, "I didn't take to yer very kindly at fust; but a feller that'll stand up for a stranger as yer did fer me, must be the right sort. I think yere solid. Shake!"

And he offered his stubby digits in grandiloquent gesture to the detective, who clasped them with a hand that was bruised and swollen. The last night's pleasures had been attended with some discomforts, but true knowledge is to be sought under difficulties. There is no royal road to geometry or to gaining the confidence of a suspected criminal. Sampson now saw this evidence of the injury his friend had received and staring at the fingers that lay within his grasp his liking for the owner of them increased another hundred per cent.



"Skinned yer knuckles, didn't yer? Well, don't forgit this. I know a friend when I find one, and I can't do too much for him."

Hicks bowed his acknowledgment of the gracious sentiment. His head was now really beginning to ache, and his soul was filled with a loathing of his actions and environments. He waited impatiently for the release that would let him get back to fresh water, clothes and linen, for with him cleanliness was next to godliness. Possibly he gave it prior attention. Soon the door was thrown open, and they were commanded to come out. The police magistrate noticed the manly and unaffected bearing of Hicks, in contrast to the sullen and wicked expression of the companion, and while he fined them both—the total of which Sampson loudly insisted upon paying—mused on the discrepancy until, after their departure, the turnkey whispered in his ear.

"Ah, yes, I see," he remarked, a smile chasing away the look of perplexity on his face.

After leaving the station-house, the two delinquents walked a few blocks up town, Sampson profuse in his expressions of gratitude, thankful for that which "he couldn't forgit," until the detective, bored with his never-ending promises, poured a flood of farewell greetings upon him and hastened away to his home, stopping but a moment at the office to have a man detailed to watch Sampson's movements. The "shadow" reported, three hours later, that the man had first dosed himself into a partly normal condition, had had the discolored flesh under his eye painted, arranged his toilet, and had taken the train for Poughkeepsie. A line wired to that city caused



one of the home detectives to be ordered "to keep an eye " on the ex-peddler.

Five days' silence, and then Hicks received an effusive invitation to visit Sampson Hall at his earliest convenience. He sent a reply stating that he would come at once, as he would be too busily engaged after that week; and upon stepping off the car, twenty-four hours later, was cordially received by the country gentleman, who was now clothed in his proper apparel and right mind. The difference between the individual now wearing a fashionably cut cheviot suit and immaculate linen, with well-trimmed beard and carefully brushed hair, was so great from that of the unkempt-looking "bum" who had lain on the bare floor of a cell only a week before, that the detective was slightly nonplussed, and the kindly manner in which Sampson pointed out places of interest, as they were bowled along the smooth road behind a pair of fast-stepping blooded horses, impressed the visitor peculiarly.

There was much of the quiet grace of the *boulevardier* about Sampson when in his best moods. A warrant for this man's arrest was inside Hicks' pocket, but the charge was based entirely on supposition. He did not deny the possible danger to which he might be subjected, for his host had something of the desperado's nature, and it was to be a game of hide-and-seek between them. Sampson might be a cowardly rascal, who could be controlled wholly by fear. At least, Hicks did not believe that gratitude alone had prompted this man to extend the hospitalities of his home. Undoubtedly, he wanted to ascertain just what the detective was trying to know.



The special purpose of Sampson's desire to enjoy Hicks' company soon became apparent as they sat in the small parlor to which they had adjourned after partaking of an elegant lunch. It was then nearly five o'clock, and the last rays of the sun glinted on the window-panes, seeming to draw sparks from the huge decanter in its ruby coloring, which stood on a side-table in juxtaposition to a box of choice cigars.

Hicks had first taken an hour's stroll about the grounds, and spoke with genuine admiration of their mingled beauties of art and nature. He was now lazily enjoying the aroma of a Reina Victoria. Sampson was pouring a generous bumper into the glasses while telling the tidy man-servant where to place a dish of oranges and lemons that had just been brought into the room. The detective gazed about him in complete enjoyment of the luxurious furnishings, the tapestry and marvelous shirring of pale-blue silk and satin that only partially hid the folding-doors, by the opening of which the two parlors could be thrown into one. Velvet plush was to be seen in such gorgeous profusion, and the panellings in Romanesque were of such exquisite coloring, that the eye soon tired of the splendor, and sought relief by looking out of the hexagonal window upon a scene more sombre. March winds had swept into utter bleakness the deciduous trees and plants, and only the evergreens stood, like solitary sentinels, in the background, beyond the hedges of box and *arbor vitæ*. April showers had not yet sufficiently drenched the soil to give tone to the incipient vegetation, but the third month of spring was near at hand, and soon there would be an awakening of



nature. The season was late, but the odor of summer was in the air. Some straggling roots on the ground gave evidence that clematis and wistaria might be lying dormant, waiting for the spring's sun to rouse them into active life, when they would climb the picturesque trellis that stood at the end of the veranda.

After arranging the Burgundy, and vulgarly running his hand through the shock of stiff black hair that rose in Pompadour style from his low forehead, Sampson had taken rest in a *fauteuil* close to the bright coal fire whose gleam grew larger every moment as the shades of coming night fell. The increasing blaze was reflected upon the brass fenders, with their heads carved in leonine features. The host stared quietly at his guest, who half reclined in complete *abandon*, as if in attempt to fathom the man's musings, and unwilling, perhaps, to break the silence that had followed their lengthened chat. Presently he reached over to the silver gong on the mosaic-laid table, and tapped it smartly.

"Lights, William," was his order, as the functionary appeared promptly, and a moment later the servant re-entered bearing a glowing taper and ignited the brilliant candelabra with their imitation candle-tips, dropped the silken hangings from their gilt catches at the windows, dallied about the buffet for a moment, and quietly withdrew with an obsequious bow.

"This *is* cheerful!" said Hicks, his voice shattering the monotonous stillness, as he looked up at the flashing gas-jets which cast their refulgence over the room.



"Yes, rather better than a night's lodging in the station-house," replied the other, indulging in a coarse laugh. Now that the ice was broken, he plied his guest with ceaseless questionings of the events attending their particularly unpleasant experience, most of which he affected to forget. The detective only gave ambiguous or inexplicit answers, in monosyllabic responses, and the conversation gradually turned to other subjects, but principally to the discussion of horses, the record of noted trotters and pacers, and the general excellences of the noble animal, for which the host had a great liking. It was his hobby. His most judicious expenditures had been made in the purchase of first-class stock, and he expatiated upon their physical worth and beauty, and financial value with considerable enthusiasm. His listener was not able to add his quota of converse, for he knew but little about equine matters. The other man was perhaps just as well satisfied, for he returned to the attack with fresh impetus. Hicks was apparently so candid—why should he not give the information desired?

"Did I tell you anything special?" was a query he put, as he shot a huge volume of smoke from his mouth, watching it break into rings as if that was the only matter of earthly interest to him. "Won't you try some of this brandy? It's a tip-top article," shoving the red jar of cut glass toward his guest without waiting for an answer.

"No, thank you," and Hicks stirred slightly as he declined with a wave of his hand.

"P'r'aps you drink wine (with a motion toward the gong)? I b'lieve I've every kind."



"Don't trouble yourself, please. I very seldom touch liquor of any sort."

"You 'touched' it pretty heavily that night, eh?" responded the other with a grin.

"Yes, possibly, but I'm not a steady drinker. One good round, occasionally, does for me."

All this was perfectly natural. Every physician is cognizant of the fact that there are men who seem fated by some inherited faculty to indulge in periodical sprees, and Sampson, though he drank more or less almost daily, was a victim to this peculiar trait—hereditary or inspired—and knew it well. Still, the refusal was a disappointment to him, for alcoholic stimulants loosen the tongue, and he depended upon some such auxiliary in helping him to discover certain facts that he badly wanted to know. Concealing this feeling with as much courtesy as he was able to display, he seized the decanter in an off-hand manner, poured out a "pony" glassful, and with an attempted pleasant "Here's to yer," sipped the contents slowly.

"'Bout the other matter. Was I very confidential that night?"

"Oh, no. You didn't tell me anything of consequence. What had you to tell?"

Sampson involuntarily started. Was he not making a mistake by asking these questions—placing the conversation on a basis of a series of interrogatories? He was obliged to gulp before he could speak.

"Nawthing, of course. But a feller will sometimes make out he knows more than he did. I knew a chap once that would lie like the dickens when——"



"You said," interrupted the other, as if in sudden remembrance, "you were a peddler at one time, I believe."

"Did I say *that*? Sa-ay, that reminds me," excitedly exclaimed Sampson, and forgetful of his former caution, he blurted out rather roughly: "I was pretty drunk; but I remember you jumped away from a house somewhere as if it was haunted."

"Yes, I've always hated to pass by that place"—a remark that was true; for, without having a trace of superstitious belief, the detective had always conceived a violent dislike to the scene of any tragedy. "It's never been rented since Catherwood was killed there. Gave it a bad name, of course."

He was looking steadily into the other man's eyes as he spoke, and his own had that steely glitter that had been noted of him before. He distinctly saw a flicker in those of Sampson. More than that, there was abject fear pictured in their depths. The hand that held the glass of brandy, almost then at his lips, shook, and the liquor was put down hastily on the table. Some second thought came to him a moment later, for he raised the tiny goblet and drained the contents in a single swallow.

"How'd you know Catherwood?" stuttered the confused man, for he had half-choked himself. "You seem to think a lot of him."

"He kept a grocery here." Sampson had not denied ignorance of the name, and he would assume the two were acquainted. "I mean in New York City—just before he went to California. I know the whole family, and I've always thought it was a sad event to have him taken off that way, just when he was in the



height of prosperity. Strange, too, that so much of his money disappeared at the time. You heard about it, I suppose."

Hicks had adapted his language to suit the ready comprehension of the other. But Hartley Sampson not only understood fully what was said, but also some of what was implied, as he thought; and he began to evince a very unpleasant disposition.

"Yes, I read it in the papers," he replied surlily; "but it was nothing to me."

With but little mental power, the owner of the mansion had recognized with animal instinct that there was some danger in this new acquaintance of his. With dumb sagacity he had, after pondering some days, thought it best "to have it out at once," if there was anything inimical to his interests. It was a piece of diplomacy his best friend would never have given him credit for possessing; but he had come to the hard conclusion that it was judicious for him to make Hicks "show his hand." It might be all aces, or only harmless seven-spots. He had never been able to dispossess himself, when sober, of that strange sensation of suspicion he had conceived from the moment he first met the *soi-disant* chemist. Appearances ought to indicate that the man was inclined to be his warm friend; but he couldn't shake off the lurking impression that he was, instead, a tireless enemy.

"Why should I care anything 'bout Catherwood?" he asked angrily. "It looks as ef you're always harping on him."

"My dear sir," responded the detective suavely, as he moved forward to an upright position in his



chair, secretly delighted, but with a look of slight amazement, caused apparently by this breach of hospitality in having the host enter into an angry discussion with him—but, unfortunately, forgetful himself not to refrain from a style of speech superior to what he had been using—"if you will take the trouble to think, you will remember that you introduced the subject. I am perfectly willing to confess, though, that it has always been a matter of deep speculation to me. There were three people connected with the murder who were classed as suspicious characters, or, more properly, suspects," he continued, quiet in manner but very watchful.

Sampson hitched about uneasily on the sofa. The red spots in his eyes were dilating.

"The woman we know is innocent; but the two men, one of them a peddler——"

The red-faced man had risen during this last speech, ostensibly to secure a match from the safe on the mantel to relight the half-consumed cigar he held in his hand; but, as he passed partly back of his guest, he suddenly wheeled half-around and gripped the detective's neck while he thundered out in mad-dened tones: "*Say, who are you, anyhow? What do yer mean by 'we know'? Who is 'we'? I b'lieve you're a spy. What is it you want?—d—n yer!*"

With each succeeding question he had tightened his clasp, and Hicks, though not taken wholly un-awares, was half-choked as he struggled to free himself from the rough hand of the burly fellow. Half-standing, he suddenly butted his head into the stomach of the fiery assailant, knocking him almost breathless to the floor, where the detective pinned



him down with his knee after there had been one mad roll together on the soft carpet. He rested full upon the fallen man's breast, claspings in a vice-like grip the wrists of the struggling, infuriated host.

"*I want you!*" Hartley Sampson, gentleman and peddler, and murderer of Jabez Catherwood! Just a moment, please," and there was a delicious satire in the polite request as the click of the handcuffs bound the two arms together. "Now, get up, you hound!"

Hicks was angry, for his neck was sore and aching, and he had difficulty in catching his breath. Sampson was possessed of great brute strength, and he had made a heavy plunge at the detective. But the latter was wiry, his muscles were trained, and he proved to be more than a match for his antagonist. The other, at this bidding, rose to his feet slowly and awkwardly, as a man would do deprived of the use of his hands.

"*Sit down in that chair!*" was the command hurled at him, and he fell over into the rocker, assisted by a slight push from the visitor at the house. "I've treated you already better than you deserve; but if at any time you make a movement to escape I'll shoot you with as little compunction as if you were a mad dog. *Do you hear?*"

He probably did so, and he certainly could see a seven-barreled revolver pointed directly at him.

"Now, make a clean breast of it. I am a detective, and I have the proper authority to arrest you. *Did you kill Catherwood?*"

"No, I didn't," muttered the other. The agony was past. He was relieved to know just what this



man was to him. He might have stopped to hate him, did he not see before him the possibility of the hangman's noose. "I always suspicioned you; but I ain't afeered to tell the truth. It's Catherwood's money I'm spending; but I never harmed a hair of his head."

"Tell me all about it, then. I'm willing to believe anything reasonable."

The slight wrestling on the floor had not disturbed any of the furniture with the exception of a turned over ottoman, and there in silence, broken only by their heavy breathing, the two men confronted each other, the detective with blazing eyes and the shining tube held firmly in his hand, the ex-gentleman, sullen and defiant, struggling with the mixed rage of his defeat and a fear of his opponent. This athletic Hicks had a grip like the hug of a boa-constrictor, and his head was as hard as a cannon-ball.

"I always thought it might come out on me," said Sampson in sheer desperation, "and I knew it looked bad, so I'd rather have it cleared up. Never thought any one would hold me fer the murder, though—the stealing's bad enough. I ought ter stayed in foreign parts; but I couldn't speak their lingo, and it made me so cusséd homesick," with a faint weakness in his voice indicative of the honest sentiment that did the man credit.

"Go on," sententiously remarked the other.

"Well, I only knew Catherwood here by sight. He was a man when I was a youngster, but I ran away, and after going all over the country I landed in 'Frisco. Sometimes I was flush, for I played cards, and agin I was dead broke. Was doing odd



jobs there when I ran across him. He was awful hard up, and when he boned me for a loan I let him have some cash, for I couldn't refuse any one. I saw him two or three times afterward, but he was still on his uppers. He left town suddenly, went to Nevady, I heard, and I didn't git my loan back. Next I heard he was up in Oregon, but I never set eyes on him agin till I had found my way back to New York and ran across him coming out of a hotel dressed up fine. He was all right, though, for as soon as I tackled him for the spondulicks he said, 'Of course,' handed me out a couple of hundred, told me he could never forgit my kindness, asked me to call and see him that evening, and said he would give me a lift. I never felt so cheered up in my life. Well, I went there with my pack—couldn't drop it any place, you know—and told the girl I would go right up to his room. When I pushed open the door there he was, lying like a stuck pig. I took it in right off, and the devil prompted me to go through his pockets. I knew he was going to give me more, for he was grateful, and I thought I'd only be helping myself to a part of my own. There was a big, fat wallet in his inside coat pocket, a lot of drafts in paper envelopes, which I tore up, and a small box of diamonds. It was a big haul, but I didn't stop to count it, you bet. I've got half a million out of it, and it ain't all gone by a jugful. His satchel was there, but I was afeared to touch that, and so I skipped. I hadn't orter done it, I know. I've told you the God's truth. You may haul me up for stealing, but I never killed no man yit."

Sampson's language was a queer conglomeration of



the localisms of his native section with city slang and rude Western speech. Hicks listened to it with something of the curiosity of a philologist.

"Very well. I am inclined to have faith in your story, if you did try to kill me a few minutes ago."

"No, I didn't, pard," and he held out his manacled hands beseechingly, as if craving mercy. "Don't say that! Of course I was mad, and I've an awful temper when it gits up."

"Never mind," said the other good-naturedly. "You will go down to the city with me quietly. I have the right to take you along, as I told you. If you will promise not to make any attempt to escape, I will relieve you of those bracelets," as he signified with grim humor the rings holding Sampson's wrists. "You don't want the people about here to see you humiliated and have a chance to gloat over your downfall. They will hear enough of it, later. Do you promise?"

"I do," and he shook his head violently in affirmation. "I'll keep as quiet as a mouse."

"All right, then; it's the better for you. I'll see how we can fix it. Your story is a plausible one, but appearances are against you."

"You'll make it easy for me, won't you, pard?" said the other imploringly.

"I'll do the best I can for you. There," as he unlocked the handcuffs, "I do that because you promised. Remember! Don't attempt to fool me. Get up and march out of that door. Wait! Here's your hat and overcoat," reaching for the articles from the rack as they passed into the large front hall. "Take your umbrella, too. Your servants will think we're



making a trip to New York. You go off when you please, don't you?"

"That's all right. They know I'm likely to drop out at any time without saying a word."

"Then go. If you try to run I'll shoot. You understand?" And any one passing those two would have thought they were journeying together in friendly companionship. There was a dazzling radiance of lamplight upon them as they walked down the avenue, and a few steps more in the semi-darkness brought them to the street leading directly to the depot. Not till then did Hicks return to his hip-pocket the little messenger of death he had carried in his hand, though he had no intention of executing his threat unless his life had been in danger. If Sampson had proved unruly, the detective would have shot into the air to summon assistance.

At the very moment they reached the railroad platform, Mrs. Catherwood was musing over the details of her daughter's marriage.



## CHAPTER XV.

### PARTICEPS CRIMINIS.

THE head of the detective bureau had just opened a window of the office, for though May had not come a great change had taken place in the local atmospheric conditions within the past day, and the Gulf Stream, in its ever-oscillating course, had given a sudden lurch toward the Jersey coast, spreading its influence along the shores of Staten Island, and in consequence the temperature had risen thirty degrees since the morning before. It was a balmy wind that came freighted with salty freshness, though slightly tintured with the dust and smoke of downtown. He had little time to enjoy this vernal breeze before he heard the turning of the door-knob, and two men entered, travel-stained and weary, one of whom sat down obediently in response to a quick gesture of command from the other.

"Ah, Hicks! is it you? What a fine morning!"

"Yes, sir, charming. And I bring you news as good as the weather. That's the peddler I've been hunting during the past six years," indicating the other occupant of the room with a disdainful nod of his head.

"Whew!" vulgarly ejaculated the chief, comprehending instantly what he had always lovingly called the "statoo quo," and properly adjusting his eyeglasses to bestow a searching glance upon Sampson's



face and figure. Take a man or a woman with a knowledge of some few words in a language other than their own, and it is remarkable with what persistent fatuity they incorporate them into every sentence possible, frequently where their use is ambiguous, seldom relevant, and nearly as often wholly wrong. It is not pedantry—it is idiocy. And the cheerful expression they assume when rolling this sweet linguistic morsel on the tongue only increases the depravity of their action and adds insult to the injury done one's feelings. It was a weakness of this official, and the pronunciation of his Latin, following not one of the three accepted forms, was as faulty as the set of his vest and the color of his cravat. It was all a combined offence against the eye and ear.

“What success you do have!” he continued admiringly, and yet with a faint suggestion of jealousy in his voice. “How the devil did you get him—‘the derelict,’ I call him?” and there was a beaming smile on his face to add to the picturesqueness of his words.

Then, as they sat with closely-drawn chairs, the detective narrated in low tones that did not reach the prisoner's hearing (for Hicks made it a religious duty never to offend a man's sensibilities) the incidents of the preceding day leading up to the arrest. There had been a collision on the road near Garrison's, and they had been detained at a small country station, not being able to come down till a morning train.

“I think he's told me the truth, chief. He must be tried for stealing, and he expects that, although I don't know what the law will think of the robbery of a corpse. I believe it's an open question whether



robbery from the person is so regarded if unaccompanied by violence. Larceny of some kind, I should imagine. He oughtn't to have more than a light sentence, as the fellow has some good points" ("and a tough hand," was his mental addendum as he rubbed his neck).

"I don't see how it can be done."

"Sampson confesses to purloining the money. Put him on trial for that."

"But the prosecuting attorney may demand an investigation of his connection with the murder."

"Stave him off, then. There is a third one in the case."

"Yes, I remember. The man with the set face."

"And I know him."

"You do?" exclaimed the other in amazement.

"You're a wonderful man, Hicks."

The detective hardly acknowledged the compliment, shrugging his shoulders as if in part denial.

"Yes, I can put my hand on him. He is high game, too; and though he must explain some things—for it looks as if he was seriously involved—I have doubts of his guilt."

"Well, who in the dickens is the guilty one?" asked the other testily. "Three suspected parties, and all of them as innocent as babes! Who is the guilty one?"

"I don't know, yet," replied Hicks sadly. "It's a queer affair, and I'm nonplussed perhaps. It may turn out to be the second man; I'm sure it isn't this one."

"I don't like the idea of any attempt to shield this fellow. It looks too much like covering his crime."



"I'll take the responsibility," and the detective spoke wearily. He was tired bodily, and he wanted to get away to his rooms, where he could give the subject more thought; for he was sorely perplexed.

"What's your idea of not having him stand trial, any way?" queried the official.

"Because I don't want to make a blunder in trying to convict a man when I haven't the proof."

"Ah, yes," chuckled the man with little hair on his head, "you want to keep clear of a *faux pas*." He pronounced the first word as if it was spelled fowx, and the ample smile once more played on his round, rosy face; for he rejoiced at the opportunity given him to use so appositely a bit of French.

"You didn't make any objection in the case of the Wagner woman—couldn't, of course, as she was dead"—seeing the chief's mouth form a leering grin; "but you believed in that confession, just as I did then, and as I do now in this man's. He really has excellent characteristics, for he tried very hard to raise himself in the social scale, and it's my opinion that a man with an honest ambition like that, weak as it may seem to a majority of people, must have a good purpose at heart. He has been charitable and generous, too, in an unostentatious manner. For an uneducated rough with boorish instincts he has done wonderfully well. Nearly all the money will be recovered. His country-seat has nearly doubled in value. I'm opposed to inflicting severe punishment upon him for yielding to a temptation that might have entrapped us, good as *we* are," and the senior chuckled again with delight.

The detective's reasoning was too logical for the



other man, who could not but understand that this subordinate was greatly his intellectual superior; but his sense of humanity was stirred by the last appeal.

"I'll talk the matter over with the district attorney. But a man that steals will do worse."

"I don't believe in any such theory. It will do for Sunday-school literature, but you know very well that because Mrs. Blank is arrested for kleptomania no one would assume that she is just as liable to kill the store-keeper. She may have been addicted to the opium habit, or she may have been suffering from neuralgia. Many an inveterate liar is the soberest man in the community, and a temperance advocate has been known to embezzle. Occasionally, you will find a monster who is capable of committing any and all crimes; but I'm heartily tired of namby-pamby suppositions and popular fallacies, sustained principally by people born without brains, and who are only capable of repeating with parrot volubility the maxims drilled into them in childhood's days—stale and unfounded beliefs of their grand-parents. There isn't a sign of remorse about Sampson. He's moderately sorry, of course; and there isn't a jury to be found so foolish as to stigmatize him as a hardened criminal, because he neither looks nor acts it. If this man is to be tried for the murder, my hands will be tied and my progress toward a true solution seriously hindered."

Hicks had raised his voice in his earnestness, and that the arrested man had heard some of his speech he knew, for there was a reflection of gratitude in the eyes of Sampson.



"I must be going. You will see to the commitment of the prisoner?" and the detective rose and passed across the room, touching the call-bell, and slowly turned to the doorway. An assistant entered at that moment.

"Yes. I'll talk the matter over, as I said," reiterated the chief, who was greatly amused at this outburst of feeling from the detective, and was really deeply impressed by this disrupting of the commonplace ideas of people of ordinary mental power.

He fulfilled his promise to Hicks, however, with such effect that Sampson was placed on trial for theft only, and principally on his own confession. He was given the mild sentence of five years in the penitentiary. The defendant in law proved by witnesses that he was away from home that evening not more than an hour; that he had mentioned his engagement with Catherwood; that he returned with no visible sign of confusion about him, and the State was unable to find any apparent cause for a quarrel. The knife found in the corpse was Catherwood's own property, proving conclusively that the murderer, if there was one, could not have entered the room with a fell purpose—in legal phraseology "with dire intent"—or he would have used some weapon of his own. The opinion was generally expressed that Catherwood's death was, after all, a suicide.

For some days the press comments were loud in protest against what they proclaimed were irregular court proceedings, and public interest was re-awakened in the old-time *cause célèbre*. Some reporters thought they had been deprived of an exciting morsel of news by not seeing Sampson arraigned for



murder. Complete restitution was made by the condemned man. Some uncut diamonds were returned, with a bank-book and the entire reversal of the country-seat, which was immediately sold at an advance of about eighty per cent. on its original cost. The "didn't I tell you so" of the gossips of Poughkeepsie was repeated with great gusto by the offended farmers, who had always thought—at least, they now said so—that there was something "crooked" about young Sampson, and who were elated at his downfall and subsequent punishment. As a class, they felt that they were avenged. After one delicious shudder of pleasure on the part of the aristocratic element, that they had never countenanced this specimen of the "new rich," life resumed its normal sway in the bustling town.

Again was Mrs. Harrod annoyed by a series of visits from detective Hicks and other officials while the process of transferring the recovered property to her was undergoing court supervision. There was not a trace of satisfaction on her part at the acquisition of this large sum additional to the princely fortune she now held, and she had at first declined to receive it upon any pretext whatever, until her husband pointed out the obvious fact that there could not be any other disposition of it. But she petulantly told him that, to her, it appeared stained with the contact of that dreadful man, Sampson, and that she would really never take possession of it.

"If you do not think the money too unworthy—for in itself it is guiltless—devote it to some charity, then," he had remarked kindly; and she had replied that she would "weigh the suggestion."



At her last interview with the detective, she insisted upon his acceptance of the \$5,000, which she considered he had earned, and when he declined taking it, reiterated her request with added earnestness.

"You have taken a great amount of trouble these past years, Mr. Hicks. If I may be allowed to say so," and there was a gracious smile on her face, "you aptly unite the qualities of a Mercury with a Hercules. I have heard the whole story of your bravery and ingenuity. In the prosecution of this matter, you have rightly earned this sum; I insist upon your acceptance," and she placed a check for the amount designated in his unwilling hand. "It all seems to me like blood-money," she continued, with a slight quivering of her body, "and I do hope the last chapter is closed. At least, I decline to have any more interest. Even if this man Sampson is guilty of the worse crime, if there was one, it will not please me to see him punished more. With no intent of offending, I plainly tell you I trust never to see you again," and there was a weakening to the tones of the voice and a melancholy droop of the features as she spoke. "The assassin is probably dead. There can be nothing more learned of it—is it not so?" and there was, additionally, a craving inquiry in her eyes.

"I do not know, madam," he replied, courteously. "Daniel Webster said that murder" (again there was a slight quiver passing over her) "'would out,' but there have been many exceptions to the truth of his statement, I fear. I assure you," and his eyes looked piercingly into hers, "I shall not intrude again unless it is absolutely necessary. The case has been



one of long standing, and I do not blame you for your feeling of repugnance, perhaps, toward any reference to the unhappy affair and dissatisfaction at the delay circumstances have imposed upon us. But there is another man yet to be found."

"You do not mean to say that you will try to find that other man and arrest him?" Mrs. Harrod almost gasped. She understood the detective's allusion, and her soul was up in arms against this "persecution," as she would have called it. "It is possible, Mr. Hicks, that you may make a serious mistake in your search—accuse some man of such irreproachable character that the perfect insanity of your charge will redound upon your own head, greatly to your discredit."

She intended to warn him. He might understand her plainly or not, as he pleased. She did not care for that. If her husband was to be hounded by this man, who possibly had been engaged for years in accumulating supposed evidence against him, the detective should be made to know that there was a great probability of his bringing shame and confusion upon himself while trying to destroy the reputation of another.

"I am aware of all the difficulties with which I may have to contend, madam, and it is my purpose to act with proper discretion," he said, rising and bowing deferentially as he stepped backward through the parlor doorway. "I have the honor to bid you good day."

"How tired I am—how tired of it all! Am I to be worried all my life with these horrible details? And to think he is now lurking about and trying



to weave his web of shame about my John! Oh, dear!" and she dropped down on the sofa, half-burying her face in the cushions as the tears welled from her eyes. But the sound of a quick, short step in the hall roused her, and she sprang hastily to her feet, throwing herself into the arms of her husband as he entered the room in search of his loved wife.

"I am so worn out," she wailed. "Promise me you will go to Europe as soon as Helen is married. Take me away, where I may never hear of Jabez Catherwood, his money, and his death. I'm so sick of it all."

But he did not know the agonizing fear this dear woman had lest *he* should be implicated—the possible contamination of accusation followed by arrest for a murder.

"I understand, Marie," he said, as he patted her on the shoulder and caressed her into quietness. "I've always contemplated making this trip, but we will go sooner than I intended and give you relief from the disagreeable conditions of the present. I saw Hicks going down the street, supposed he had been here, and I was sure you must be unduly excited again. Don't cry," and he brushed away a tear that was falling over the velvet sheen of her cheek. "Cheer up. Your health demands a change, I know. Will September do?"

"Yes, John," and she raised a face beaming with love and full content to his look. "You are so good to me, my husband," and the arms clasped him tightly as she again lifted her face, warm and flushed, for the kiss that was never refused.

"I shall be so glad to have you all to myself, and



it will be such a happy relief," she ended with a long-drawn sigh, that told him more than all else how she was suffering. He protected her now, but she would shield him in the future, weak woman as she was. If money would purchase the silence or inaction of that dreadful Hicks, she would give him a sum of money that must seem a fortune to a man who was only the recipient of a weekly salary. If he was not to be bought, though she had faith in Walpole's maxim, she would crush him with the power of wealth and influence. When she had her husband away, conditions might change. That sneaking detective might die, and the whole affair would be sunk into oblivion. Present safety demanded her husband's absence from home.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### DOMESTIC BLISS.

MISS HELEN CATHERWOOD was united in marriage to Mr. Edwin R. Austin, at St. George's Church, Stuyvesant Square. The ceremony had been a social event, even if all the world was out of town, in the hot, humid month of August. Less than a month later, the names of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Harrod were among the list of a Cunard steamer's passengers for Europe. The newly made bride had, with a strange persistency and perversity, selected the 17th inst.—she regretted that it had not been in June—for the consummation of the nuptial union, despite the protestations of her mother and her *fiancé*. But no: she considered it a memorable day, and wished to have an additional reminder of what she now considered to be a religious duty—the discovery of her father's murderer. Midst the bustle of the marriage preparations, surrounded by the fussiness of helping friends, in the joyousness of receiving congratulations, and the happy hours passed in the inspection with ever-renewed delight of the numerous and costly wedding-presents (the cant phrase being an expression of the reality in this instance), the novelty of a new life so completely absorbed her time that she actually forgot her vow of vengeance, and the half-conceived scheme fell into desuetude.

Then the wedding trip, which extended from



Niagara Falls to Nahant, and followed the line of the triangle to Norfolk—alliterative in name, but varied in scenery and clime—was a three months' dream of delirious joy and rapturous experience. It was only when she was finally domiciled at her new home, on West Fifty-second Street, that her thoughts had time to revert to the one great ambition of her life—the uncovering of that mysterious secret.

"I could make that man suffer the pangs of Prometheus or condemn him to the useless toil of a Sisyphus," she had, with affectation of classical learning, said to her husband one winter's evening when they sat enjoying true home-life, her fingers plying the busy needle on a bit of fancy tatting, his slippered feet resting upon the edge of the various colored tiles of the fire-place as he carelessly perused the pages of a magazine. An ivory paper-cutter was lying in his lap.

"Which man, Nellie?" and he carefully separated the white intersection of the article he was reading.

"Why, *that* man, of course."

"Yes: that reminds me of *La Fille de Madame Angot*.

'What he?' 'Why, him-he.'"

"Pshaw! The man that killed poor dear papa, I mean. How I wish I could find *him*!"

"It's a very old story, my dear, and possesses an element of staleness. I should think you would prefer to lock up the skeleton in the closet, instead of giving him such a constant airing;" for, in truth, he was quite tired of her frequent reference to the subject, and it had become very hackneyed to him months before. Catherwood *paterfamilias* was dead, and the doctor wasn't quite sure but that he was



grateful for present conditions; for, from the little trifling incidents he had heard related of the defunct, the old fellow could not have been a very picturesque addition to their social circle, and might have been more fantastic than would have been desired. "Good enough, perhaps, in his way," mused the physician, but then it was just as satisfactory to have him out of the way. And his mother-in-law, too—for whom he had the greatest respect, however—was three thousand miles or more remote. Indeed, it was all a very congenial arrangement, and he couldn't refrain from thinking that, partly owing to these reasons, he was an especially happy man.

"But you can not feel as I do," she protested.

"No, I should hope not. My interests are in keeping people alive and not in hunting for cadavers."

"Cadavers! What a horrid word! What do you mean by it?"

"Oh, nothing, Nellie; only that I'm not engaged in a vendetta, or have any special craving for revenge."

"But you never lost your papa in the terrible way I did."

"Very true, dear. Did you notice that article on solar physics in this month's issue?" waving the magazine at her. He knew well enough she had not even seen the current number till half an hour before, but he was anxious to change the topic of conversation.

"No, I'm only interested in the revenge business," she replied with sulky satire. "But, Edwin, don't you think it will ever be known who did that horrible thing?"



"Can't say, Nellie," he muttered, trying not to lose his mental connection with the page before him. It was satiety to him, and he heartily wished, with all due deference for his wife's feelings, she would stop or change the discourse:

"How I wish I had the box of Pandora to pour open upon the villain's head! I wouldn't even leave hope behind for him."

This was dreadful! He must make an effort in his own defence.

"Did Lillie bring or send those gloves to-day?" he inquired irrelevantly.

"What gloves?" testily.

"She had a half-dozen pair of Chanut's make that were too small for her, and she told me she was going to present them to you. Real compliment, too. Too small for *her*!"

"What a good, kind girl your sister is," said the young wife, in a mollified tone, bending over to imprint a light kiss upon her husband's forehead. "Your family's very nice, but you're the nicest," and she rose and settled herself down in her husband's lap with one arm thrown lovingly about his neck. "There, let solar physics go to-night," taking the magazine from his hand and placing it on the table, while the paper-knife fell to the floor unheeded by them both. "Tell me everything you did to-day."

"On one condition, Nellie."

"What is it?"

"That I am not to hear another word about this—this tragedy you harp on so; and you will please discard all mythological references."

"I promise; but I must tell you one thing."



"Take care!" and he shook a finger with playful menace at her.

"I remember; but I must tell you about the detective."

"The detective?"

"Yes, Detective Hicks. He's the only one I've ever seen."

"Where was he?"

"Here."

"I do wish that men of that sort were kept out of this house! It seems to me somewhat criminating to have the acquaintance of such people. A worthless, lazy, whiskey-sipping crew," and, pushing her aside, he rose to his feet and walked about the room for a turn or two in half-angry mood. "I hate mystery and mysterious people," he ejaculated harshly.

"Don't be vexed, darling," and she stopped him by throwing her arms about his shoulders. "I can't help it if persons call here. Of course, I will refuse to see them if you insist upon it. He's very much of a gentleman, I am sure. He asked about the health of mamma and Mr. Harrod" (there was a slight shade of reluctance in naming the last), "and he told me that he had accidentally noticed our advertisement for a house-girl of refined antecedents. You see he knew our residence. I said, 'yes,' and he replied that he could recommend an acquaintance, a very superior kind of young woman, who had become straitened in circumstances, and would gladly take a home with such a family as ours—people who could appreciate her services, he said. She didn't want to be treated like a servant, although she would know her place. Of course, I told him he might



send the girl here. I think it was real kind of him. I suppose even a detective's reference can be accepted in such a case," and her voice was tinged with mild sarcasm.

"Perhaps it can; possibly it can't," was his dubious response. "I fail to see any reason why our domestic arrangements should be of any interest to him."

"And I must tell you," she continued, unheeding his remark, "that it is certainly very suspicious that he desires to obtain so much information about Mr. Harrod. I don't understand it. I wanted to ask him point-blank, but his cold, fish-like eyes deterred me. Edwin, dear, sit down again. That's a good boy," and she gently pushed him back toward his easy-chair, into which he sank carelessly. "You won't understand it, but I believe I have a mission in life. I don't want to join the women reformers——"

"I do wish many of them would reform in several respects," he interrupted.

"How can you libel our sex so? Aren't you ashamed to talk that way?"

But he shook his head negatively.

"I'll forgive you this time, but don't repeat the offence. As I was saying, I'm not interested in female suffrage, but I do not wish to be simply a society woman—

'To eat the lotus of the Nile,  
And drink the poppies of Cathay.'\*

I have higher aspirations."

"Study medicine, then, and become a female



physician," he responded grimly. "Take a specialty, and make yourself an oculist or aurist. Think what a useful assistant you would be to me!"

"I don't think the suggestion so bad. It would be doing something. Strange thoughts trouble me now. I feel like Diana" (and she was an ideal personification as she stood there, her queenly figure crowned with the golden aureole of massive braids of shining hair, and her eyes glistening with some new inspiration), "ready at times to deal out death and destruction among mankind."

"But wouldn't you suit me better as a Hebe?" he inquired, in a mild tone of irony.

"No, as Ariadne. Why don't you talk to me as Brutus did to his wife?"

"I think it, dear, all the time," and his voice softened as he looked up at her with lover's eyes.

"Yes, you big darling," and she slipped down on her knees at his side. "I'm a bad girl to worry you with my cravings for revenge. You sha'n't be troubled any more."

"Better not, Nellie, for in such a race you may prove to be another Atalanta," punctuating the words by patting her cheeks. "But you haven't heard what I did to-day."

"No: what was it? Tell me all about it," and she nestled closer to him with childish eagerness.

"I saw all my patients, of course; but, in our cant expression, every one is distressingly healthy at present, and so I had plenty of time to go a-shopping."

"Shopping?" with an accent of extreme incredulity.



"Yes. I bought you a lovely pair of canaries with a beautiful cage, and a genuine Maltese kitten that is called 'Topsy.' "

"You did? Oh, the dear little pets!" delighted that two of her heart's desires had been granted.

"Where are they?"

"The songsters are in the library, and the feline is in charge of the cook."

"And you didn't tell me before!" with an air of deep reproach, simulated to cover her gladsome smile.

"But I must see them now."

"Let me tell you about the parrot," he cried, as she jumped up and went dancing from the room, but his words were lost upon the empty air, and her husband, laughing, picked up the cutter, seized the monthly, and again opened its leaves, remembering that he had also promised her a spaniel, and that it should be called "Coco."

"Not half as wicked as she thinks she is," was his murmured comment, as he resumed reading.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### AT THE SEA-SHORE.

It was the last week of July, 1881. A nation was waiting in breathless anxiety to hear the daily bulletin of the condition of a dying President. Hope rose and fell as the alternating announcements from the attending physicians were despatched throughout the land. . . . The season was at its height at Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard, and the steamboats from Wood's Holl and New Bedford brought on their daily trips hundreds of excursionists in search of pleasure and health, and a few, still in remembrance of the original camp-meeting settlement, to praise God in his first temples—the virgin groves that the Baptists had occupied for daily religious devotions during their annual encampment for many years past. The greater portion, however, came to stay as long as the limits of their bank account or the depths of their purses allowed, for the enjoyment of that existence known as recreation. The site was happily chosen. There was magnificent bathing. Drives of singular beauty led away from the concrete pavements to the hard sand of the interior of the island, where there was a profusion of foliage and shade, with lovely views of sea and land, and where were seen the rose-embowered mansions of the rich recluses who were content to live there all the year.



The liliputian railroad, running along the shore, skirting the point of Edgartown Harbor on to Kalmata—a never-failing source of merriment to the curiosity-seeker—was now resounding with the noise of the train that had just pulled up beyond the line of bath-houses, and was emptying its freight of home-seeking passengers. Just beyond, the hard, white sand of the beach glittered in the bright light of day, and the few shells at the edge of the water were of purple and golden hues—prismatic tints that, alas! owed their coloring to the salt spray that dashed over them and reflected the sun's rays; for let them but be taken away, and

The poor, unsightly, noisome things  
Had left their beauty on the shore,  
With the sun and the sand, and the wild uproar,\*

There were also stones of snowy whiteness, some of them shaded to a delicate pearl that always retained their purity; and where the sea-weeds grew were strange rare plants and blooms that would have been exotic in the parlor vase. Almost directly west from the station, on a line across the boulevard and inclosed fields (known as the park), on the wide, heavily overarched piazza of a modest two-story and a half cottage, stood a fair woman in *négligé* costume—in the monstrosity then known as a Mother Hubbard—with bright ribbons and a brighter color in her cheeks, looking with anxious eyes at the crowd who were hurrying up to the sheltering pavilion, an imitation of a Chinese pagoda, from whence they sped in all directions, the great bulk continuing up the

\* Emerson.



plank walk toward the Sea View. Presently she gave a little exclamation of joy. Her face became wreathed in smiles, and, stepping up to the plump year-old cherub held by a rather good-looking and proportionately plump nurse, chucked it under the chin as the tiny hands grabbed at the blue sash floating from its mother's shoulders.

"Papa's coming, Harry darling! Aren't *you* glad?" and, imagining the desired assent to her question in the tired nod that baby gave, turned with a still happier smile for that reason to the sturdy young man, in boating costume of a very fancy type and rich material, who was just then opening the garden gate, an entrance in front upon the middle brick walk. Even Topsy, grown large and fat, purred a welcome home.

"Oh, Edwin, I'm *so glad* you've come! Why, how tanned you are, and what were you doing away over night?"

His lips pressed full and strong upon hers, before he answered: "Had a regular shipwreck near the Old Man Rocks."

"Shipwreck! Oh! you weren't in danger," she gasped in tremulous dismay, a trifle of that affectation, from which no woman is entirely free, showing in her manner.

"Yes, dear—nearly drowned. Got caught in a gale, and our boat was staved to pieces. Some of the Indians at Gay Head helped us, and I made one of them row me over to the South Beach, and then I came up home by rail. But neither love nor money would induce any of them to make the trip last night. There was a regular hurricane, and the old salts said



they wouldn't tempt fate. Had to camp out, too. Some of the fellows like it so well they're going to stay, but I knew you wanted me here."

"Yes, I did, dear," throwing her arm about his head and giving it a loving pressure, for she had remained standing when he sank down wearily into a rocker.

"And it blew 'great guns' here, as I heard one of the steamboat men say this morning. I was terribly frightened at the wind, and I worried about you all night. Don't go away on such a trip again, please."

"Not in a hurry," responded the husband, smilingly. "I think I want a week's rest now."

"Why, where's your watch?" noticing the absence of the gold chain that always hung across his breast.

"Lost it," was his laconic reply.

"What a pity! and it was such a beautiful one. Can't it be found?"

"I'm afraid not. It sunk in about six fathoms of water. A spar caught in my blouse," he explained "and snatched the chain and watch away. I know just about where it is. Some of those chaps down there are good divers, and I offered \$100 for its recovery. But I don't expect to see it again, and I'm so sorry, dear."

It was a present from her, and he was grieved for her sake.

"It doesn't matter," she said softly, for he should not be allowed to think she cared for the loss. (It was weeks later before she learned what a struggle he had had for his life.) "I'm glad you're safe at home. Why, even the baby missed you; didn't you, Harry boy?" taking the crooning child with mater-



nal delight from the girl, and after holding him at arms' length in front of the father, placed him in the lap of the young husband, who could not refrain from a display of anxiety at this juncture.

"I don't know how to hold him, Nellie," he said apprehensively.

"There, just keep him in that position. Don't move," innately tickled at the plaintive tone of his voice. "Wait till I bring you a nice cold lemonade. Come, Sarah. Tell the cook to hurry up," and she danced into the house, trilling a song as light-hearted as any young wife could be who had everything to enjoy, with the world's delights at her command.

After some moments of painful suspense to the man on the piazza, the baby's mother appeared with a tray bearing a luscious beverage in a glass, two or three straws by its side, strawberries and slices of pine-apple pushed in among the particles of crushed ice, and a faint coloring to the mixture, as if a stronger element had been added.

"Drink that, Edwin. You do look so fatigued. Does it suit?" she asked, as he inserted a straw and took a dainty sip, desirous of prolonging the luxury of taste.

"It's delicious! When did you learn to make them?"

"Mamma showed me how years ago. She taught me to be quite a housewife. You didn't know you possessed such a treasure, did you? Just think! She will be home soon, and I haven't seen her for nearly two years. Why, she must know Europe by heart. I can just imagine that she will have a real foreign air. Yes, that reminds me," and the fair



face grew clouded, and there was a harsh tone of antipathy for something in her speech. "There was another matter that worried me yesterday. Here, Sarah, take the child; he's getting sleepy," handing the dozing infant to the "assistant," who had just reappeared in the doorway. "Good-night, Harry," and she bent over and imprinted a fond kiss upon the little one's cheek.

Turning back to her husband, she continued: "I must tell you all about it. It's horrible. But go up and dress. Dinner will be ready soon. You can listen better after you've eaten."

Two hours later, they sat on the veranda looking out over the waters, imagining that they could see the flash of the Great Point Light on Nantucket, away to the southeast. She always declared that a faint rim visible in the early morn was that famed island, never believing his assurance that it was only an outlying islet, such as Muskegat. There they sat until the radiance of the rising moon hid all from sight, and its silvery reflection played upon the rippling waves of the great Atlantic that heaved with low, monotonous boom upon the sandy, graveled beach. The plank walk was crowded with a merry throng, and voices of jest and laughter filled the air of night. Occasionally, some belated driver came rushing along the boulevard. Upon the little jutting point of half-wet shore toward the south a few lovers wandered in pairs, unmindful of the fact that it was low-tide, or that there was a prophecy of rain in the banks of clouds rapidly piling up against the open sky, and reminding one of a vessel scudding under bare poles. The tinkle of a piano, the twang



of a guitar, the melodious puffing of a steam-organ in some concert-hall gave fulfilment to Longfellow's promise that "the nights shall be filled with music."

Somewhere up-town there was a ball, for the deafened reverberations of a brass band broke upon the ear, mingled with the hurried stamp of feet and the jingling of the window panes. Under the blue vault of heaven, that covered the scene in its sublimity of majestic repose, there was joyous life, motion, and brightness.

Austin tossed his post-prandial cigar over the railing into the grass of the garden-plot, and, turning to his wife, beckoned to her to take a seat in his lap. "I'm rested now, and can hold such a great woman as you are with ease."

"I'm not a big woman. I only weigh one hundred and forty pounds," she retorted with a slight grimace of assumed offence at his words.

"Just big enough, dear," and he rubbed his long, brown mustache against her cheek. "What was the 'horrible matter' you were to tell me?"

He had perfect knowledge of the excessive amount of highly strung adjectives that form a part of the ordinary woman's phraseology, and he had been really curious to hear this revelation; but ordinarily he was not of an inquisitive nature, and he would not allow it to be seen that such a feeling had dominated him now. In his profession he was earnest and hard-working—had even thought of preparing some medical "papers," though he was not of a literary turn of mind—but as regards outside matters he was indifferent to such an extent that some people thought his lack of interest to be the result of a careless



nature. But we are constantly misunderstood in this world, and most frequently by those who are and should be the nearest and dearest to us. It requires a strong infusion of philosophy to bear implications which come with added intensity of injustice from relatives and friends. It is sad and true that our blood connections are often the last to acknowledge the merit of our efforts—the good that is in us; and, with the assertive right and familiarity born of kinship, are the first to condemn. This applies more forcibly to the communities of the northern half of the United States than to the southern. In the latter, they are likely to err in the contrary direction.

Austin knew all this: he accepted conditions that could not be changed—not willingly, perhaps; and he regarded the world's opinion at its proper value and signification. At least, it required something more than a newspaper item, current gossip, or an idle report to make him believe in a man's goodness or superiority, or to accept as a fact an accusation of dishonesty or dishonor. His wife was thoroughly acquainted with her husband's disposition, and she also was aware that his habitual good-nature was not an evidence of mental weakness. He might not be a brilliant man, though for a physician of independent wealth he was certainly a painstaking one, and if of generous impulses, he could be roused to a pitch of virtuous indignation that would brook no defiance, nor be satisfied with any attempted excuse. So she deliberated for an instant, and then spoke hesitatingly as if the subject had escaped her memory for a time, or was of trifling import. This was a mere subter-



fuge, however, for she had been nervously anxious to impart the information to him ever since his return.

"Oh, yes! What I mentioned. And it *is* horrible. That detective, Hicks, was here."

"Do you mean to tell me that that fellow is again calling at my house?" His voice was stern, and there was an added rigidity to his features that she could plainly see. "I will not have it. The next time he comes, I want you to order him from the door. I will obviate that necessity, perhaps," and in pursuance of this determination he wrote a terse note to Hicks on the following day (addressing it to detective headquarters), the purport of which it was impossible to misunderstand.

"I couldn't help it, Edwin. He insisted upon seeing me, and we had a long talk. He has been to England to arrest some criminal, it seems, and he saw Mr. Harrod there. [Never, as she had told her mother, would she call that man "father," and now she was proud of her determination.] I don't admire detectives, dear, any more than you do; but Mr. Hicks was very polite, and I couldn't see any reason for being offended at him. It appears he has discovered I dislike Mr. Harrod, and I suppose he called to ascertain the cause. Of course he's one of those men that doesn't tell everything he thinks. I was glad to have an opportunity to thank him for sending us such a treasure as Sarah—you can't deny she has been," and the husband nodded acquiescence to this.

"He was very confidential, and I understand from his talk—he didn't assert it positively, remember,"



she interpolated, almost out of breath, for her speech had been rapid, partly owing to a fear that her husband in his anger would stop her in the recital of this interview—"that Mr. Harrod is the other suspected man—"the man with the set face," you know, that called on my father. I understood, like a flash, why I had always mistrusted and despised that man. It was intuition. He was the one that killed poor papa."

"Killed the devil!" was the incongruous exclamation of the other. "Pardon my profane speech," as he saw the reproving amazement pictured in her eyes. His gentle tones proved that he craved forgiveness.

"Nellie!"

"What?"

He was looking into her face seriously. "I don't want to believe you are losing your mind, but the distrust of those nearest and dearest to us is the first symptom of insanity."

"He is not 'near' or 'dear' to me," she retorted saucily.

"Perhaps not; but he is to your mother and myself, at least, and to many others, I am sure. You are the best woman in the world, but this treatment of your stepfather is a very serious defect in your angelic composition. You have grown morbid from thinking on this one theme. I know John Harrod well, and I think he is one of the grandest men I ever met."

"I don't care," returned the wife, quite ready to burst into tears, for this slight remonstrance from her husband was more nearly a quarrel than any-



thing else that had yet happened in their married life. He was very angry, and his face was set quite hard, his manner cold toward her. "I do believe he did it, and the detective thinks so, too."

"The detective! Pshaw! Why, this thing occurred eight years ago. What's the detective been doing all this time? And how do you know he thinks so? Do you know that if Hicks would dare to make that assertion in public he would be kicked out of New York City in twenty-four hours? And that wouldn't be the end of it either. How do you know what he thinks?" and in his righteous indignation Edwin Austin almost forgot he was speaking to his wife.

"He said there were so many implicated"—and her voice was sadly broken—"that he had lost time in following false clues. Then he's very busy with other matters. His brother officers make fun of him for holding on to this case, and call him a 'crank.' " \*

The last term was a new one, but Austin understood its application and significance.

"He told me he didn't want to believe such a dreadful state of affairs—'entertain such a suspicion,' he said; but he knew surely that Mr. Harrod was the man that called—that the two were identical."

"But *how* does he know it? And even if Mr. Harrod is the one man they've been trying to find, that doesn't prove his guilt. Why doesn't he accuse Mr. Harrod at once—to his face, when he met him in London, for instance—instead of running to you

\* This horrible word is the offspring of that miserable assassin Guiteau.



and other supposed enemies of my *friend*" (and he accentuated the word strongly) with this little tale?" asked the husband, irritably, at the same time unwinding his arm from his wife's waist. The constant relation of this tragedy and a never-failing discovery of the guilty party, who always proved to be innocent, was very exasperating, and for his wife's sake he wanted the affair buried in oblivion. And now to accuse Harrod! He felt like indulging in the street slang of "Rats!"

"It's true, though, Edwin," and she rose slowly with quivering lips and fluttering heart, drawing away from the cold presence of her husband, knowing too well that she would not secure any show of affection from him as long as this discussion continued: "Mr. Hicks has an old photograph of Mr. Harrod, which he showed to the servant-girl who lived at the boarding-house, and who is now a married woman in Philadelphia, and she recognized it as a picture of the man with the 'set face.' She is willing to swear to it in court. I don't know why the detective doesn't arrest him; I suppose he is waiting for more proof."

"Poor Harrod! He'll explain it, if there's anything that needs explanation, when he returns. I've no fear of his not being able to show he is not culpable, and no doubt of his integrity. He is a noble man, and I'm proud to be classed as his friend;" and Mr. Austin set his teeth together with almost a snap, indicating that the absent one could rest assured of one strong pillar of support in the possible hour of need.

"Perhaps," and in reflex feeling, her tones were



acid; "but this explains the cause of my deep-rooted aversion to him. If he did do that cruel thing, I'd like to hang him myself."

"Your sentiments are not very creditable to a woman of kindly heart, and you forget he is your mother's husband." The lips opened just far enough to curl in infinite disdain. He was really seriously offended; his eyes snapped; but she had a diseased mind on this subject. He would be her physician, and—and, he would not quarrel. He rose to his feet and caught her by the arm.

"Come Nellie, let's go in and see baby. The dew is falling."

As they passed in-doors the nurse girl rose from the lounge just inside, where she had been lying down, and followed them silently, whispering: "Mrs. Austin will help Reuben all she can; I see that."



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE GIRL DETECTIVE.

REUBEN HICKS, before his departure across the ocean with extradition papers to take in charge the noted criminal, "Big Mike," who had been concerned in the celebrated Manhattan Bank robbery,\* as it was popularly styled, had a long and singular conference with his chief. He had been informed that the newly married pair, Mr. and Mrs. Austin, required the services of a nurse. Reuben had a sister of nineteen, who since her parent's death had lived a humdrum existence with prosaic relatives among the granite hills of her native State, but who, with the natural anxiety of youth to see something of the world as exemplified in the phases of a great city, had frequently written to him, almost in a tone of supplication, imploring his permission to allow her to come to New York. She would have been better satisfied to live in Boston, if he had been residing there; for it was educational advantages she craved more than all else. Upon paying a late visit to his old home, he had become better acquainted with the young lady whom he had not seen since her girlhood, and he was particularly impressed with her natural instinct of seeing into people's character. They were the only two left of the family, and common

\* Occurred on Sunday, October 27, 1878.



affection dictated to him that it would be best for their mutual interests to be near one another. Then, he had the pleasure of meeting his sister's very dear friend, a dashing brunette of twenty-one. At least, she was of that type as far as eyes and complexion were concerned, but her glorious tresses of hair were mingled dark and auburn—not a coarse red, but the mixture of gold and brown that Titian loved to portray. It looked like burnished bronze in the sunlight, but was of Egyptian darkness if seen only under the rays of the moon or in a half-lighted room at night. She appreciated the merits of this earnest, capable man, and apparently enjoyed both his company and his conversation during his brief stay. Her modest indorsement of his sister's solicitations had secured the unconditional promise from Reuben that Sarah should be allowed to remove to New York. Both the young ladies were radiant with joy when he had finally consented.

"It will give me an opportunity, Mr. Hicks," the charming "friend" had remarked to him, "to make a long-desired trip to that city, for Sarah and I will not be willing to be separated for any great length of time—will we, pet?" affectionately fondling the plump figure who sat by her side on the parlor sofa—one of those hideous contrivances of stained wood and horse-hair that were once considered the manual sign of respectability in the ordinary country and town home of New England, but which, thanks to the efforts of the apostles of Delsarte and the disciples of Oscar Wilde, or the reign of common sense, are fast being relegated to their proper desuetude.

"No, Rachel, we can not," was the commonplace



but hearty response from her companion, a young lady of medium height, with delicate features, a face that was colorless but cut like a cameo, in which two luminous gray eyes sat far back in the head with that retrospective gaze that told of intellectual acumen. The forehead was almost too full and bold for feminine beauty. Light brown hair that gave no evidence of unnecessary friction with a stiff brush, but curled in careless freedom, added dignity to her appearance. A physiognomist would have said she was a female Napoleon. No one had ever called her pretty, though she was beautiful with the look of a true soul and mind imprinted upon her features.

Partly in response to the charm exerted upon him by the bright eyes of the young lady and the superiority of his sister's character, Reuben was almost tempted then to express a wish that the two girls could live together in the new home. He was selfish enough to wish that Miss Rachel Walker could be where he would have frequent opportunities of extending his acquaintance with her. He was hardly rich enough to support Sarah as he could have wished, and there were sundry objections to letting her fill the usual forms of employment, such as secretary, clerk, amanuensis, or typograph. She should never be a shop-girl as long as he possessed a dime. Her detective instinct, stronger than his, possibly might be utilized to the greatest extent, and he had long known he needed the aid of feminine ingenuity.

There is a class of restless women who would undertake a prize trip around the world, the manage-



ment of a temperance crusade, or accept the nomination for the mayoralty with equal alacrity and equal inability to fill the duties of the engagement or office. But his sister was not a representative of this irrepressible, dissatisfied species. She was a good, sturdy, healthy girl with no nonsense about her, well educated, of an independent nature, and possessed a wonderful talent for drawing, particularly in caricature—a *forte* which caused some of her acquaintances to be careful not to offend the sensibilities of one who could portray their mental or physical weaknesses in an unanswerable argument with a half-dozen strokes of the pencil. Her kindness of heart, however, deterred her from making her natural gift an imposition, although her genius was readily recognized. Some of her drawings and one or two water-colors had taken prizes at subordinate exhibitions and county fairs. The one great craving of her soul was to take an art course in the Parisian schools. She had read of David and Le Brun, and she could almost copy from memory the masterpieces of Poussin, Lorraine, and Du Fresnoy. Her ambition was a torture to her, while confined to her humble sphere with a total absence of congenial promptings. A lack of sufficient capital was the only reason she had not already—despite the remonstrances of her friends, who spoke of the dangers surrounding the life of a single and unprotected woman in the gay capital—taken her way across the Atlantic. She had the same contempt for trite reasonings as had her brother. With but slight financial aid from him, she had paid her living expenses for some years past, only a little surplus



remaining at the end of the fiscal year, as she had laughingly told her constant companion, the interesting brunette, who had one brilliant attraction—the power to converse fluently on a great variety of subjects. Her lively talk was a decided contrast to Sarah's brevity of speech. The sister's mind was largely of the analytical order, and it was her keen dissection of the aims and motives of those about her that had aroused Reuben's wonder.

Sarah had plainly told her brother that Rachel was just the kind of a woman he needed for a wife.

"I'm sure she could help me wonderfully," he had said, referring to his sister while enjoying the single *tête-à-tête* he had with the voluble young woman of such lovely dark eyes, for he had in confidence told her his earnest desire to secure his sister's assistance.

"Undoubtedly, Mr. Hicks, for she's very smart, and her perception of people's character is remarkable."

And, though maiden delicacy forbade, she would gladly have added that she believed she, too, could aid him. After loving the sister so dearly, it was not difficult to feel a strong interest in the brother. Sarah's anxiety to see more of human nature, to know more of the world than can be acquired from books or association with the small community she knew, and which she regarded as commonplace, was the chief source of her desire to live in the Metropolis. Like all the honest followers of M. Lecoq, the mere shadowing and watching of people was a branch of his art despised by Reuben. He liked *finesse* and the more complicated transactions. If



there was a will in dispute, if there were suspicions of misappropriated money, if a shop-keeping firm was desirous of knowing how its employés spent their money, or an anonymous letter was to be traced to its origin, the woman detective would naturally delight in the mystery, the secrecy and diplomacy of the discovery. Yes, there *was* a place for Sarah.

Would his chief consent to such an arrangement? was the question he put after he had explained his intention at length to that worthy man a few days after his return from New Hampshire. The worthy was dubious. It was an innovation, and as such it was not agreeable to his conservative training. (This is another term for mingled prejudice and stupidity.)

Again, there was no appropriation for such work, though she might be employed under the class of special detectives. Sorely against his inclination, for he hated to yield to the appearance of a belief that he did not know the requirements of his business, he at last consented, hedging his assent to the proposition with restrictions that would have caused a less determined man than Reuben to indignantly withdraw his application. Her name was placed upon the rolls at a small compensation (almost too low to be called a salary)—simply, however, as S. W. Hicks. There was no prefix to the name, and only inquiry would have revealed the fact that it was a "Miss." The arrangement was also kept secret from the entire force. If she did nothing or proved incompetent, her name could be quietly erased. Only his friendship for Hicks sustained the superior officer



in this tribulation of a new departure—the demolition of traditions and the precedents of the office.

Her position as a bread-winner was peculiar, and yet her first case, in which she was successful—discovering by her clever services how the designs for novelties of a Broadway house were being shown to a rival corporation—won the chief's unqualified approval. But Reuben soon managed to have her engaged at the home of the Austins, and here under the name of Sarah Woods—her last name being eliminated for what might be termed family reasons—she had lived, hunting for what her brother believed to be the lost clew. He went there immediately upon his return, but the house was closed. With little difficulty, he learned of the family's sojourn at Oak Bluffs, and presented himself as has been recorded. When he had made his adieux, he passed along the hall, took silently from his sister's hand at the door a roll of paper, upon the leaves of which she had written her report, and for which he gave her a kiss and a beaming smile of welcome. Not a word was spoken by either. The walls were thin, conversation might be overheard, and no one, at least now, must know their secret. In the shelter of his room he read her statements. The written sentences told him that Mr. Austin would give time and money in defence of Mr. Harrod; that Mrs. Austin was the strongest ally they could secure, and there followed a list of what she had designated "possibilities." Among the half-dozen was one that he read twice: "*That some one unknown may have entered, unobserved, and, after committing the crime, escaped through the open front door.*"



"Yes, little sis," he mused, "'tis true there may have been a revengeful spirit, who followed him from the Pacific coast, and only found an opportunity at that last moment; but you may originate a dozen other possibilities just as good. The idea is not new. What I want is a *probability*."

Her revelations were slight, but Reuben had not expected much. The couple lived as cheerfully as any properly mated pair would do; but Mrs. Austin, apparently without reason, had conceived a great aversion for her stepfather. This he already knew. Why was it? He had seen a gleam of satisfaction in her eyes when he hinted the idea of Mr. Harrod's complicity; but she had not replaced any confidence in him. Perhaps she had none to make. Sarah thought it could only be explained on psychological grounds. When she was a member of Harrod's household she might be able to secure the key of the mystery. It was arranged that she was to be transferred by the daughter, Helen, to the service of her mother, who had requested her to find a ladylike house-girl; and Mrs. Austin, thoroughly satisfied with Sarah's exemplary manner, had, after ascertaining the latter's willingness to accept the new position, written to Mrs. Harrod, who was then in Buda-Pesth, that she had "a gem" of a girl, who would be just what her mother wanted, and from whom she would part with disinclination, although baby now only needed the attention of some child to wheel him about in his carriage. "And Harry was so fond of Sarah," although there was nothing in the young woman's disposition to invite affection from any one, she was so reserved and perfectly self-contained.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### A NEWSPAPER MAN.

L. BUNCOMBE MEEKS was, in his own proud words, an "*attaché* of the New York *Twirler*." A sensible man would have said that he had connection, editorial, business, or reportorial, with that paper. We do not sketch him as a type—Heaven forbid! He was simply an excrescence.

There was no doubt as to the fitness of the name of the journal, for it was Republican or Democratic, Mugwump or Greenback, Independent or irreligious, according to the amount of money sent in for its paid expressions on public affairs. The larger the check the more dilution of opinion. Sympathy was freely given to the readers. It was popularly known as a venal paper, whose utterances one day contradicted those of the preceding issue. One railroad president, Gob Barrett, had sneeringly referred to the cheapness of its columns as an advertising medium; for it had only cost him \$200 for a statement, under the guise of a published editorial, which was really worth several thousands to his corporation at that time.

Meeks, who was a sort of Sir Fretful Plagiary, had come from his home on what is locally known as the Eastern Shore of Maryland. He had grown up from a common origin, among the sand and dwarf pine trees, the peach-tree orchards and watermelon patches



of that favored section, famous for its mosquitoes and whiskey (quinine being the habitual remedy for the prevalent malaria), its delicacies of soft crabs, oysters, and terrapins; and he had passed his early, senseless existence on the shores of some one of the numerous creeks or estuaries of the Chesapeake indenting that country. A term at a seminary up among the hills of the western part of the State had completed what he regarded as a finished education, on the principle of being the first man in the village, if not a Cæsar at Rome.

His diplomacy and careful snobbery in the office, where he soon became a pet of the publisher of the paper—who, managing a trust estate, considered himself both editor and proprietor and instilled that idea into the minds of all casual acquaintances—and thereby secured his own rapid advancement from the position of reporter to that of an editorial assistant, where he was generally made into a Landouzie, officiating only as such a popular character could do. He was really the publisher's messenger, and his ostentatious display of the trust placed in him caused him to be the best-hated man connected with the paper. It was one of those glaring instances where incompetency, mental vacuity, and servility take the place of merit and worth—in reality, an outrageous usurpation. A wise dispensation of Providence does not allow such a malodorous and inconsistent incongruity to remain longer than to serve the moral of offensive tribulation that may come upon the good, wise, and pure. Some of his *confrères*, fearing his vindictive inclinations, toadied toward him with the same unction and time-serving fawn-



ing he showed his employer; but a few others, whose position was too strong to be affected by his whims or enmity, held him in undisguised contempt. The amount of work he performed for the columns of the news-sheet was quite remarkable in its littleness. As a space-writer he would not have earned enough to pay his board. Cribbed editorial paragraphs and rewritten cuttings formed his stock in trade, or occasionally a transposed item from some magazine article was presented by him as original "matter."

One earnest, capable Bohemian of great talent, whose work was acceptable anywhere, who was noted for his "scoops,"\* and who wrote over the pseudonym of "Lud," had publicly referred to him as "a great newspaper fake." When it was proved that the story contributed by Meeks to a popular weekly had been plagiarized bodily from the pages of an old, out-of-print, and comparatively forgotten monthly, the outspoken condemnation of "Lud" was accepted as a popular verdict. The publisher, Sunga, had, however, virtually instigated his subordinate to this piece of chicanery; for he had allowed some reputable journals to state, quite definitely, that he was the author of the famous anonymous literary success, "The Bread-Winners." This publisher, who was also known to have denied his nationality and discarded his assumed religious affiliation, who had been denounced by a high dignitary of the Church as "a renegade," stood by his favorite in the hour of need, acting upon the principle embraced in the "fellow-feeling" theory, and because

\* Or "beat," in newspaper parlance. It signifies special news no other paper secures.



his overwhelming vanity needed the daily doses of flattery from Meeks (who understood the craving desire for notoriety actuating this bombastic weakling), and, if necessary, the false testimonials he was willing to give in support of his employer's greatness of mental strength. Two crafty, sneaking natures had met—the one fawning and obsequious, the other pompous, fraudulent, and vulgar. It was a sight to make angels weep, but reliable men smiled scornfully.

Still, the heart of Meeks was sad. Rumors of his literary piracies were rife, and a general era of unbelief hedged him in. Some one had remarked that the initial to his parted name probably stood for Liar, although he had stated it was Linear, his mother having taken a fancy to the name after seeing the word in a discarded arithmetic that formed about one-fourth of the home library. If so, as some wag remarked, it was the only "straight" characteristic about him; for his reputation was dubious, and beneath a thin body of cadaverous outlines hung a very irregular, bony pair of legs, and there were bulbs on his hands and feet, and lumps on his face that indicated a physical unsoundness. For weeks his coarse, grunty laugh had been hushed. There was a limit to the endurance of the leading writers, and it was not possible to farther advance him in position. But the publisher could increase his salary from time to time, which he did with an unsparing hand, in strong contrast with the ungenerous mood he displayed toward abler men. Meeks, after severe mental worry, arrived at the conclusion, principally assisted by a stray item which told of the lucky dis-



covery by an employé of a contemporary sheet, that a reporter must necessarily be a superior detective, and in confirmation of this theory he talked glibly of the startling acuteness in some wonderful work done by apocryphal characters, whose careers were loosened from his not fertile but fervid brain—or from the mass of gelatinous substance that did duty for that organ. In his opinion all crime could be readily traced by the ordinary newspaper man, and a detective bureau, with its scores of henchmen, was quite an unnecessary addition to the expense account of a municipal government. Arm a reporter with pencil, paper, proper authority, and a warrant, and the millennium must perforce approach with rapid haste. He would disestablish the condition by a theory. It was lovely but crude. Even the crushing retort that a man of native detective impulse might have taken the situation of a news-gatherer, and then, guided by his unerring instinct, have unearthed some hidden tragedy, did not disturb the complacency of Meeks, who was satisfied that he possessed qualities which might distinguish him in this special vocation. He wouldn't think of losing his proud standing as a purveyor of news, for he was enraptured when the thought came to him of how many brethren of the press had gone to Congress, had sat in the legislative halls, had filled the gubernatorial chairs; and this scintillating fancy was only dimmed by his failure to find that not one had been the chief magistrate of this great republic. Wasn't there some old buried crime he could turn up to the light of day—some broken links he could weld together? If fate would only serve him for once! It



would bring him fame, give him a national reputation perhaps, for—a week.

What a luscious anticipation! The boy, always hated by his school companions way down in Dorchester county for the contemptible meanness of his behavior—giving strong evidence of the dislike they held by stoning him for his youthful proclivities in seeking the influence of those above him by slavish fawning (the *sobriquet* of “Tell-tale Meeks” was known for miles around)—made into a great man, to become identified with greatness, and those childish associates forced to see his name surrounded with lines of commendation and praise, a whole country amazed at his powers of deduction, and the press of a nation lauding him for unwonted skill! He was almost delirious. Like Alnaschar of old, he already was kicking at his enemies when—alas! he could not see even the basket of eggs or glassware before him. Surely it was an inspiration. But there must be a beginning, and in his leisure hours, which were many, he scanned the files of the newspaper, turning the pages back from those of the last year—for his memory, like his legs, was weak. He found items in abundance. There were ghastly murders, strange disappearances, unknown suicides, and he marked in his memorandum-book the date of the more startling ones. He read quite patiently for a few days, until he came to the report of Sampson’s trial, and from that reference was easy to the “Startling Tragedy,” recorded on June 17, 1873.

This account impressed his fancy stronger than all the rest. He made investigations, and obtained some information from the detective headquarters.



It was strange that so little effort had been made toward unraveling the mysterious skein of events.

Why had not some boarder in the house been suspected? The entire proceedings were very stupid, to be sure. The acquaintance of Hicks must be formed, but that gentleman was still in Europe. How he chafed under the forced delay to the completion of his plans! He ascertained the date of the detective's return, saw him come from the steamer with the prisoner he had extradited, and, as soon as Reuben had landed the man in the Tombs, sought the former with a personal introduction. What did Mr. Hicks think of the Catherwood case? Well, Mr. Hicks had many thoughts upon the subject, but he was not in the habit of expressing his beliefs or conjectures to strangers at the first meeting.

Still, the newspaper man was certain the matter might be laid open to the public gaze, announced himself with great effrontery as being of the opinion that "things had been going too slow," and held the detective buttonholed, boring him with dreary platitudes, cant phraseology of the composing-room, and intimations of his projected task to find the criminal.

"I reckon I know who he is now, Hicks," using the easy familiarity of an ill-bred person who mistakes this form of salutation upon short acquaintance for evidence of his knowledge of social forms, and comradeship, thinking it will be appreciated by those addressed.

"Ah! And may I ask whom you have honored with your suspicions," inquired the other in a tone of delicate sarcasm, that would have wilted a man of finer susceptibilities. "I shall gladly receive your



information, for I've been seeking the party for nearly eight years, and my efforts have been unavailing."

It was his first sight of Meeks, but he had taken mental measure of the other, and but half veiled the contempt he felt for the self-satisfied ass who grasped all knowledge with so flimsy a hold.

"Why, study the motive, Hicks." The detective was prompted to knock him down at this repetition of an uncalled-for vulgar assurance. And then, *the motive*. When bare possibilities become fixed facts and probabilities are base illusions; when the man caught with smoking gun, standing over the fast-chilling corpse, is really innocent, and only a victim of circumstances or fatality; when the hypocrite frequently is not unmasked till after death, and the one upon whom vituperation has been showered during life is deified after his passage to a less troublesome world; when truth is a paradox and a man a mystery to himself—how can any one define the motive? God alone knows the truth.

Reuben had studied this complex problem for years, harassed and perplexed by conflicting ideas; and now this mental runt with elastic brain was bidding him to study the motive!

"I see but one person, if we except the widow, who has been benefited by Catherwood's removal, and he has taken advantage of the situation—has done right well, too."

"Do you refer to Sampson or Mr. Austin?"

"Of course not. I mean Harrod, the lawyer. Don't you see it? It's a plain case. Plain as the nose on your face."



As Meeks' nasal appendage was, in its offensive shape and size, more of a protuberance than that of the detective—a nose more of bony construction than of cartilaginous formation—a just and wise mentality should have prompted the speaker to mention his own facial adornment. But a lion's skin has always failed to conceal an inferior beast. It was by only the mightiest effort of will that the detective kept his hands off the fellow standing in front of him, and not even that self-imposed restraint could quiet the tremor of his voice, as he replied: "When you know that gentleman as I do, with his high moral purpose, his blameless life, and his great intellectual strength, always used for the benefit of his fellow-man, you will possibly entertain a second consideration of the matter."

Then he turned abruptly away, with only a slight inclination of his head, muttering: "The puppy! How I would like to kick him!"

Harrod might be guilty, but if so it was the only flaw in a long life of stainless character and action, and there must be some excuse for it. Possibly he had been attacked by Catherwood, and the killing was the result of a righteous act of self-defence. Any jury would accept the lawyer's version of the affray, and a verdict of justifiable homicide would be rendered with ready promptness. But why this concealment? Harrod was younger then, and may have dreaded the finger of suspicion, the impress of a world's scorn and contumely; but now he was so strongly intrenched in the hearts of thousands that a confession from him would be taken at his own



estimate of its valuation. He would have little to fear.

Reuben had decided upon one purpose. If the man was to be driven to bay, he should be followed in a royal chase, and not run to earth by a petty, sniveling cur. All would be known soon.



### *BOOK III.—AT HOME.*

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#### CHAPTER XX.

##### SECOND HAPPINESS.

THERE was not a happier woman in the world than Mrs. Harrod the day she set foot on Pier No.—, North River. It was “home, sweet home,” and the re-echo of the plaintive words of Payne found a resting-place in her heart, as they had in that of thousands before—as they will in millions yet to come. Despite torn-up pavements, and streets reeking with filth, its lowly tenement-house system, and the constant menace to life, New York has a charm whose impress can never be effaced.

It was the heart's welcome of familiar scenes, and not that she had failed to enjoy this two years' trip that had covered almost every habitable portion of Europe—that had extended from the base of the Pyramids to the angry, swirling waters off the Loffoden Islands; that had given her a glimpse of the burying-ground of Scutari, from the city across the Golden Horn of the Bosphorus, and a view of the Moorish dominions, across the blue sea from the Queen's Chair of the rock-ribbed Gibraltar. But it was in Paris and Vienna, Milan and Madrid, where every minute brought some new excitement where,



the flying hours were tinged and gilded with fresh pleasures, that she quaffed the full cup of delight.

The butterfly craving instinct, natural to most women, was there given full relief. The dull, monotonous life she had led for more than thirty years was but a condiment, sharpening the zest with which she entered upon this beautiful existence of travel, recreation, and enjoyment. She had told her husband that it was the real honeymoon to her, the true realization of love's young dream—something she had not known in her first marriage, and she had felt as if Paradise was at last granted to the patient, uncomplaining soul.

"Even if I suffer in the years to come, John," she remarked to her husband, as, standing on deck forward near the bow, they had first sighted the light of Fire Island, while the dense, black clouds of smoke poured forth from the steamer's funnels like streams of discoloration on a starry throne, and the huge throbbings of the monster engine beneath seemed to come like the breathings of a worn-out heart—"even if life again becomes the miserable, unbearable, treadmill routine of the past, nothing can take from me the memory of these two years of perfect content. Would that to-morrow we turned again with our faces to the East," speaking unknowingly with Masonic fervor, and sighing as if over some departed pleasure soon to become only a remembrance, the recollection of which would even quickly fade.

Then, there was that merciless Hicks still winding the threads of irrefutable evidence against this loved man. She had almost prayed that the detective



might die. Was there a shadow of the gallows to throw its ghastly silhouette over the eve of her life? Widowed by process of law! She could almost scream in her agony of mind, and yet she must not breathe a word of the danger to him—her John. Forewarned would not be forearmed in this instance. She would recoil from giving him the insult of suspicion. How could she save him? Flight was useless. Justice would hunt for him were he at the poles or buried in an Asiatic jungle. And only the sight of that blazing herald, now fast falling to leeward, had brought all this turmoil of thought upon her. Home was happiness, but it was not peace.

Her husband had been anxious, too, for some months past to return to his field of labor, and she dared not whisper a hint of the possible calamity that might fall upon him. Not that there was proof against him—oh, no! but the accusation and his tardy explanation would throw a blight over his prospects for all time. It was cruel. She hugged his arm convulsively. But he had long since become accustomed to her display of nervousness and her naturally depressed moods.

“Why should you speak of sorrow in the future, Marie? All that is past with the years gone. Don’t allow yourself to grow melancholy now, or I shall really believe it’s homesickness after all. You’ve always been happy with me, haven’t you?”

“Always, John. Your very presence has filled my heart with joy from the first. There, I’ll be a good girl,” and she brushed away a falling tear. “It’s so foolish in me to be despondent when nothing



but joy awaits us. I will not conjure any dismal forebodings—it is childish,” but, in her dread of possible future misery, she shook with a violent tremor.

“Are you cold, dear?” he inquired, as he pulled the wrap up more firmly about her shoulders.

“No, not in the slightest. Don’t go. Let’s remain here,” for he had partly turned as if ready to escort her from the deck. “I long to be at home, John, but it can not bring me the happiness I’ve known since we left there. Why, dear,” and her manner became animated, “I don’t believe that any one else could say truthfully, as I can, that I’ve hardly known a personal annoyance for twenty-four months, all because of your tender care,” and she pressed lovingly the arm of the fine-looking man at her side, who had grown broad and stout, and whose dignified mien was far removed from that of the slight physique of the distressed, perturbed student of years ago. “I was annoyed there,” with a motion of the head toward the lozenge-shaped island beyond, whose point is at the junction of two great rivers, “and I fear a return of some unpleasant conditions, that’s all.”

“Which ones, Marie?” Except in the privacy of their rooms he never addressed her with a term of endearment. There was something about the man that would make sentimentality seem mawkish. He was neither cold in heart nor action; but all life was serious to him. A phrenologist would have said that there was an entire absence of the bump indicative of an expression or appreciation of humor.

“What annoyances?” he repeated.



"Oh, I hardly know. Let's change the subject, please." She spoke in flurried tones. "Think of it, John! I'm a grandmother and you're not even a father yet. Do I look so very old?" and she half-pushed him, playfully, in front of her, gazing into his face with searching look as if reading the affirmation of what she would have been pained to hear.

She could not see plainly, for only the dimmed rays of the headlight shone before them, and there were broken streaks coming from the cabin-windows that intensified the shadows. There was true affection in the calm eyes that were directed straight toward hers, however.

"Nonsense, Marie. You know you are one of those fortunate women who have learnt the secret of Ninon de l'Enclos, and who have the charm, if they ever do grow old, of doing so gracefully. I'm satisfied with your looks. What's it to any one else?"

"Nothing, dear—nothing. There is no one in this wide world—and I know now how much wider it is than I imagined years ago—whose beliefs or opinions are worth *that* to me," and she snapped her fingers in great disdain at the imaginary individuals who might have the temerity to differ from her husband's views, for his statement was law and religion to her. A strict accordance with the facts would qualify the implication of Mr. Harrod's words, nevertheless. Perhaps, he knew it, or possibly the lover's eyes still beamed upon the woman who had been such a perfect companion, whose devotion to his interests was a never-ending source of wonder to him, if it did invite malicious witticism and sneering conjectures from the evil-minded ones of their acquaintances.



Her love had been as constant as the perfume the salt winds shook from the folds of her black silk as it was swished to and fro—a delicate, lasting aroma that was individual in itself, and gave no hint of vulgarity to those who might object to the personal use of extracts. There was a time when it might have been doubtful which of the two possessed the seniority of years; but to-day she appeared much the elder, and she had secretly confessed, in her inmost thought, that she knew it. There was a matronly look in her features, not so placid as in years gone by; an increasing tendency to corpulency, that had deprived her of some of her earlier charms. Her eyes had lost their youthful brightness, though at times there was evidence of a feverish anxiety in them.

It might be that she dreaded the revenge of time, which would reduce her to a condition of homely obesity, while he was still a man in the very prime and vigor of manhood, with all the energy and capability of youth.

“I’m really anxious to see my grandchild,” she continued. “Helen writes that he is a beautiful boy, and wise beyond his years; but what else does a mother ever think? Her last letter stated he had not been named—christened, I mean; for I believe they are calling him ‘Harry’ for the present. I must make her give me the right of conferring a name upon him—the best in the world. Do you know what I mean?”

“I couldn’t possibly guess,” he replied with a half-smile at his wife’s evident enthusiasm. The nomenclature of babies is something beyond all limits of jurisprudence.”



"Why, 'John,' of course. No name but 'John' "— but she paused abruptly, feeling the slight change that passed over him, and imagining she could see the look of pain that flitted across his face. With ready understanding she blamed herself severely for her imprudence of speech.

"You must remember it is your daughter's child," and his voice was cold to her ears.

"Forgive me, John, for my heedlessness! I didn't think."

The ordinary woman's reason in excuse of every conceivable form of delay, mismanagement, faulty conduct, or even of negligence that is criminal. Akin to that fine form of logic which they all offer as a set reason for argument, and composed wholly in the initiatory expression, "because," no sentence of the English tongue finds such ready use from feminine lips during the periods of childhood, maturity, and old age as that of "I didn't think." A school of methods for collecting one's wits, where memory and the study of your fellow-being's rights form the curriculum, is a national requirement, and if supported by the patronage of those who need such instruction would be the greatest financial success of the age.

She knew well enough how vapid was this trite apology, and her voice trembled as she spoke.

"It's a shame the way Helen has always acted toward you! I should have chastised her many times if it hadn't been in deference to your request that I would not. I do hope the silly girl has changed in that one respect."

"It's doubtful, Marie. Her conduct has always



been a source of unpleasantness to me, and I must now ask you as a favor that we be kept apart. I can bear this injustice no longer."

"And you shall not be offended more. My husband is first in my affections," the love-light gleaming in her eyes and hiding the angry look that had been aroused by the thoughts of her daughter's culpability.

"She has her own home," the wife continued. "Mine—ours, John—can never be opened to her till she shows you the respect it is your right to exact."

They stood there silently for a few minutes; and then, as the night winds were raw and a seething gloom had swallowed up everything about the steamer, they turned simultaneously toward the saloon. As they passed slowly into the spacious apartment they were quite blinded by the glare of immense chandeliers, whose glass pendants swung in merry movements, sending forth coruscations of light like the glitter of diamonds. Though music and mirth were present, they strolled on, weary from their long farewell watch on deck, and troubled in mind from the various phantasies their conversation had called into being.

Forty-eight hours later they were domesticated at home, and Mrs. Harrod had been given a glimpse of the baby, whose blinking eyes, dark like the father's, had stared in wonder at this new relative, but whose hair was of a glossy gold like that of its mother. The silky hair made the grandmother think of Jabez; and thus, even in her first sense of delight at being again surrounded by affection's ties,



a pallor of gloom and miserable remembrance was thrown about her.

Mrs. Harrod duly complimented the sturdy grandchild, whose chubby hands were pulling at the lace trimmings of her dress in a manner suggestive of an incipient tendency for destruction, and expressed admiration of the household details of her son-in-law's residence. She had not forgotten to ascertain the state of her daughter's feelings toward Mr. Harrod. She was horrified to learn that they had not changed, but had rather become intensified with time. Worse than all was the unexplained declaration of the daughter, that now she knew why she had entertained such an unconquerable aversion for her mother's husband.

"Tell me what you mean, Helen! Have I returned home only to bear again the burden of constant worry on account of your strange actions and unappeasable dislike of a man whom you should proudly honor for himself alone. [Upon her daughter's lips rested a decided, unpleasant sneer.] What has become of the Christian training I tried to give you?" and she grasped the younger woman's wrists, as if impelled to exert her rightful authority as parent.

"It can not be helped, dear mother!" The daughter pulled her hand away and threw both arms in a long embrace around the woman for whom she had never lost her childish regard. "You will know in good time. Don't be vexed with me. Let the matter rest. I can only see you in this house, you know, as I can not enter your doors while that man remains there."

"Helen!" The right hand was raised threaten-



ingly. "I will not bear these insults from you! Tell your husband I shall be pleased to see him at our home, but I do not know that I'll ever come near you again."

With dignified carriage that failed to conceal the hurt she had received, the distressed woman passed from the chamber, and, declining to listen further to the daughter's pleadings, called Sarah to her—for that handmaid awaited in the vestibule the exit of her new mistress—and was driven homeward, sorrowing and harassed at these mad freaks of her only child.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE SYBARITE.

THE architecture of Brooklyn is generally a combination of that seen in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Occasionally, along such thoroughfares as Fulton, Flushing, Clinton, and Bedford avenues, and in the vicinity of Prospect Park, there is a distinct style of building, original and of a local flavor. Along Brooklyn Heights and about Montague Place there is a faint suggestiveness of Boston solidity. There is no more uniformity in the houses than there is directness in the streets. Both are a mazy complication that never cease to bewilder. The pet word "*élite*," is stamped upon theatres, butter, Tompkins county apples, and Long Island eggs.

In this great city of homes, Reuben Hicks lived. It was a modest, three-story building (with the prevalent dining-room basement) of pressed brick and marble trimmings, very much like the houses in the larger Southern cities. It was set back just far enough from the picket fence in front to allow the growth of a solitary maple and two or three rose-bushes of the Jacqueminot order. An old gentleman and his wife, wealthy, childless, and solitary, rented the upper rooms unfurnished, simply that they might feel a sense of companionship and security. Reuben, with a horror of flats and a dislike of hotel-life, had



gladly availed himself of the opportunity to rent the entire third floor.

There was a side-garden of ten or twelve feet in width, where the grass grew along a trimly-kept hedge that bordered the brick walk reaching to the blank wall of the more aristocratic and pretentious residence which towered up, five stories high, capped by a Mansard roof. At the rear was a garden, daintily arranged in mounds and beds, which was partially shaded by some small, gnarled apple-trees, and in which grew more roses of the tea and blush variety, and here also was a struggling cactus-plant that did not like its meridional change nor the foreign soil under such a cold sky. A cape jessamine crept up some trellis-work fixed there for its support, and a wild ivy had taken root against the blank-wall, and was covering the monotony of brick and plaster with its own beautiful festoon.

A plank walk extended along the centre of the plot back to a dainty summer-house, now covered with wandering honeysuckle, rich in fragrance—for the bloom and loveliness of summer was over all. Here, the view to the waters of Gowanus Bay was almost unbroken, and but for the presence of some unsightly brick-kilns and rude shanties, a few hundred yards away, one could look beyond Sheepshead Bay to the south shores of the island, where in the Atlantic numerous white-winged messengers, in shape of sloop and schooner, sailed merrily along under the impulse of a stirring breeze.

A second-story chamber had been granted by the aged couple as the home of Reuben's sister, who visited her "family" as often as the willingness of



Mrs. Harrod permitted. That lady, however, was generous in her treatment of the young girl, both as to time and compensation, and for both mother and daughter she soon conceived a violent fancy. Miss Sarah Woods possessed the not common faculty of endearing herself without any personal effort to those with whom she came in contact, and in the practice of her present occupation it was quite a necessary adjunct to success. She had not received any pay from the office for the past ten months, as this individual enterprise of her brother could not be considered as legitimate work of the city bureau. He added a weekly stipend to her wages, and had promised her the half of the \$5,000 he had received from Mrs. Harrod in case her assistance led to the successful solution of a problem which had now become a part of his daily existence. It filled his dreams at night; it was an ever-recurring thought when awake.

Her room was plainly furnished, though the much-loved easel and paint-boxes occupied one corner; and here she passed a half-day weekly, and all of Sunday every other week, at work with brush and pencil, on which occasions she also brought to her brother all the information she had to impart; but frequently the details were slight.

She had advanced a theory of her own, which her brother did not accept with the complaisance or earnestness of belief she could have wished.

He was a trifle afraid of her overweening confidence in her own abilities, although he had great faith in her powers of discernment. A woman's sensibilities were likely to draw her into imaginary



conditions devoid of reason, and to precipitate a catastrophe as foolish as that of the female mayor of a Kansas town, who eloped with the masculine superintendent of the fire department, both leaving families to mourn or to be gladdened, as the case may be.

Though there were only the dainty indications of feminine occupancy in her room, with the cut-glass bottles resting on the bureau, and the pink bands holding back the lace curtains, his apartments were a revelation of luxury and a display that was almost sensuous. One could understand, after seeing them, why he showed such indifference for dress, jewelry and personal adornment—why he was lacking in the common vices and ulterior habits of a gentleman, for here was proof that he had one besetting sin, and it was a taste for splendor.

The drawers of the rosewood bureau were thrown open, and dainty piles of garments—cloth, silk, and velvet, linen like snow, cravats of splendid hues, slippers and smoking-caps, kerchiefs with initials worked in hair—were tumbled together in the greatest confusion. Strange collection for a man who had no aspiration to indulge in swell attire! If he had been an unmarried clergyman, no explanation would have been needed. They must have been useless presents, or else he had purchased them to satisfy his love for color. Handsome brocaded furniture; rich, creamy velvet carpets, into which the foot sank ankle-deep; curtains of damask and lace; a dark mahogany buffet whose shelving was lined with variously colored Bohemian glasses and silverware, first appealed to one's sight. An oil painting



or two of superior merit; a copy of a Murillo ("In a Church at Seville"), some half-dozen steel engravings of rare execution, chairs, tables and rockers in red and gold, next drew the attention.

Last, there was a book-case of walnut and gilded edge, well filled with new, old, and rare specimens of the printer's art and the bookbinder's fancy, all of which, in direct contrast to the other furnishings, showed considerable use. There was a set of classics: Rabelais and Wilkie Collins, Gaboriau and Longfellow mixed in strange companionship; histories, volumes on toxicology and qualitative analysis, novels by Boisgobey and Hawthorne, a copy of the Koran; while Byron's and Whittier's poems stood side by side in queer juxtaposition with "Don Quixote" and Goethe's "Faust." Then there were porcelain lamps and glittering chandeliers, Smyrna rugs, feathery scrolls, and a leopard-skin covering a bit of tapestry, and everywhere an almost bewildering collection of bric-à-brac. In the ante-room, a rose-tinted globe cast a mellow light upon a bath-tub of pure marble, into which water flowed from solid silver faucets. In the small back-room was a collection of bottles, phials and jars, some filled with colored liquids, and only the approximate retort and blow-pipe explained their presence; for the owner was an enthusiastic chemist, and his practical knowledge of this fascinating science had been of great advantage to him, especially during the past winter, in the case of *Fond vs. Love*, when he proved, by rubbing some fluid over the apparently blank sheet, that a signature had been made, as claimed by the plaintiff, in whose employ he offered this test in open



court, and thereby saved a fortune from being converted into the wrong channel. The grateful man, whose character and prosperity had both been saved by the detective's brilliancy, had insisted upon Reuben's acceptance of the magnificent sum of \$12,000, and some portion of the money had been expended in the adornment of these rooms. He had also presented his sister with a "lovely gold watch and chatelaine," as she wrote her friend Rachel. Together with the meagre savings of years he had invested the balance judiciously, and was now the possessor of some real estate and a few gilt-edged securities. Twenty-five hundred dollars of the amount received from Mrs. Harrod still lay intact in the bank.

This Tuesday morning—a day of grace with him from professional duty—he sat musing as he stretched himself lazily in the recesses of a huge arm-chair. He had just completed his morning's exercises (the source of his great strength) with the clubs and pulleys of the side-room—which was a miniature gymnasium, and which contained an extensive assortment of pistols, revolvers, daggers, foils, broadswords and cutlasses, most of which had been turned over to him as "spoils" from the office. Even a billy, several slung-shots, steel knuckles, and a network which held a bar of jagged steel in a leathern thong, were among the lot of dangerous weapons. He was in his underclothing, wrapped in a gorgeous dressing-gown and apparently exhausted from the club-swinging and bag-punching of a few minutes before. Presently he rose to throw himself on the lounge for a few minutes' more rest, preparatory to taking a bath in the inviting perfumed tub of water



that had just been filled. He took up from the lounge, almost reverently, an oblong affair with cretonne covering having a flounce about it; gently pulling off this outer case, he saw a most complicated structure with intricate needlework and radiant with embroideries, silk edgings and millinery fancies, as daintily constructed and as full of finery as a bride's valentine. The decorative beauties of this head-rest—for it was a sofa-pillow—were pleasing to his enraptured gaze, but it was the enameled bit of paper with her name, "Rachel," pinned to it, and the rose stitching marked "Reuben," that brought a thrill of delight to his heart. He laid it carefully aside, and seizing the morning paper sank down to rest. But he could not refrain from thinking, not of the Catherwood case, or of the dozen-and-one other perplexities of his profession, but of a sweet face, the color of a rosebud, with eyes of inky blackness and a firm, sweet mouth, that had spoken such kind words when he had made a hasty visit to New Hampshire the week before. It was the second time he had met his sister's friend, and now she had sent him a memento in return for a slight favor done her. He had loved his bachelor freedom above all else, but there was a sentimental change settling upon him.

"I don't suppose I can afford to remain single much longer. Every one has the same cant advice to give me—get married. 'Tis not good for man to live alone. Sis will soon leave and go to Paris, for she grows tired of her present derogatory position, and I must now assist her to the development of that higher ideal. I couldn't refuse, and I believe she has money enough to carry out her project without



my aid; but I'm sure she will remain a short time longer, as I so earnestly requested her to do. Why is a newly married pair the recipient of so many congratulations? Only upon the theory that they have made a sensible move. It is a sort of public demonstration, that carries out the popular belief and voices the sentiments of St. Paul that one has done well. And yet it is not always well."

His thoughts reverted to the long list within his individual knowledge of wife-beaters, wife-murderers, fair and unfair *divorcées*, the ruined homes, the broken hearts, the strained relations of some still wearing the marital yoke, the misery and despair this supposed union of hearts had brought.

Marriage was, oftentimes, a failure. It was a great lottery, and there were many blanks; but some fortunate ones had drawn prizes, and there was no prize to compare with this. Would a wife be a help-mate to him—a companion, whose tender sympathy would excite him to redoubled effort, for whose praise he would be roused to emulation greater than he had yet known? Or would she be a mere devotee of dress, to whom everything from a new pair of shoes or gloves to a pearl-and-gold *lorgnette* was "just lovely," and her bonnets always "sweetly pretty." Who would have a limited vocabulary, be deficient in ideas, speaking of every conceivable object as "a thing," and only able to express her convictions to the extent that she "loved" this or "hated" that, even when it was such a simple matter as a button-hole in the first instance or fried potatoes in the second? Would she be a woman to worry him with trifling importunities, to evince pleasure only when



he was able to supply her constant demands for "some change" that she might purchase "something," and to whom a shopping-tour was the great object of existence. Or could he hope to find an affection that neither time nor circumstance could affect; that ill-health or loss of money could not impair, and only death could dissolve—one that would bring to him an appreciation of his labors and an interest in his aspirations? If he only knew there was another Mrs. Harrod to be found, and he could secure her acceptance of his heart and hand, he would marry to-morrow. How devoted that woman had been! What constant regard had she always shown that favored man, her husband, and how much she had aided him in securing the proud position he maintained!

But "into each life some rain must fall." It was his duty to bring a formal accusation against this brilliant lawyer, though the humanity of his heart seemed to take the place of the judge. He held in his hand some uncontrovertible facts, and yet he did not wish to believe in Harrod's guilty participation in the unholy taking-off of Jabez Catherwood, and still less did his sister, who was having daily opportunities of studying closely the man's character. The lawyer's honest eye, and his free, noble presence was a physical protest against such an imputation. Alas! Reuben knew he must do *something*.

The jibes of his brother officers grew more tantalizing as the months went by, and his sister persisted in evolving a new theory which admitted his whole course of reasoning and action to have been wrong and unnecessary. Of course the arrest of Sampson,



with its subsequent developments, was a skilful piece of work, as even his associates acknowledged; and the presiding judge had complimented him upon his sagacity.

The dripping water arrested his attention. He jumped up, discarded what slight clothing he wore, and a moment later there was a splashing and surging, as if some leviathan of the deep was in the outer room. After this came a shower-bath and then violent rubbing, as the friction of the coarse Turkish towels sent his tingling blood into rapid circulation. In a few minutes he returned appareled in clean linen, a rosy hue visible on face and neck and the partly bared arms. His musings, then, as he sank down into an old-fashioned cane-seat rocker—the only piece of antique furniture in the room—were softer than before. He had already acknowledged the receipt of the gift, but he had an excuse for further correspondence, and he intended to magnify its importance. A slight lameness of his sister's wrist had prevented her from sending kind words to Miss Rachel.

Rising with alertness, he went over to a curiously carved table, laid in mosaic, and taking down from a shelf above writing materials, he began a note to the New Hampshire girl of dark-eyed splendor, the devoted friend of Miss Susan, but now his friend as well. Only the occasional scratching of the pen broke the silence.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### "CHI TACE CONFESSA."

REUBEN HICKS was, in Eastern parlance, well educated. His reading had been extensive; he had some knowledge of the classical languages, though he would not have professed to enjoy the original Greek of the Iliad as well as he did Lord Derby's translation, but in amount of solid and accurate information he could compete gracefully with the ordinary college graduate. In the slang of the newspaper office he was "an all-round man," but his special knowledge of some subjects evinced rare scholarship.

Returning late to his rooms, a few evenings after he had written the letter which was the beginning of a correspondence through whose medium he was at last given complete happiness—for he married the brunette beauty the following Christmas—he lighted only a single gas-burner, as the night was uncomfortably warm, and stood engrossed in thought as he unconsciously threw the burnt match into the receptacle for his cigar-ashes.

Finally he reached up and took from his store of books one bearing the title of "Proverbs of All Nations." He rapidly turned to the index-heading "Italian," and then brushing over the leaves found in its alphabetical arrangement what he wanted:



"*Chi tace confessa*," with the accompanying translation, "Silence is confession."

"How much is that true, I wonder?" he soliloquized. "Silence regarding what—confession of what? I've never understood it, though it may be very simple to the Italian mind. Silence may be a shield for some one else, I know. Is it possible that John C. Harrod is a living exemplar of this adage? There can be no longer delay. Something must be done, and I'll see him to-morrow," he muttered with strong emphasis, as he closed the book with unnecessary force and replaced it on the shelf. "I almost hate my work at times," he grumbled as he turned away.

How did he know that the man with the "set face" was Harrod? Reuben had, in his earlier investigations, ascertained that a man named Davis had been a fellow-boarder with the lawyer. This item of information did not seem of particular interest to him until after the conviction of Sampson. Then his memory reverted to the fact, and after some months of interrupted search for the *gourmet*—who had made, as was his usual custom, frequent change of residence in search of his ideal, good table-board—found him domiciled on Third Avenue over in Morrisania, and speedily made his acquaintance. Davis had not changed in general appearance, and apparently wore the self-same low soft hat, or a repetition of his favorite style of head-gear, that always had the look of being a second-hand article. He still retained his own peculiar slinking gait, and was possessed of an excellent faculty for remembering some events, while his natural vindictiveness supplied the lack of some other



mental attributes. He had never forgiven the imaginary slight placed upon him by being denied a share in the delicacies that were placed at Harrod's plate, nor had he forgotten that he was defrauded of some revenge upon his old-time boarding-mistress for this affront. The memory of a kick would have passed away from the tablets of his brain; but to see dainties for which his mouth watered placed just outside his reach was to him but a renewal of the pangs of Tantalus.

Did he remember the day Catherwood was murdered? "Perfectly well," he told Reuben. Not the day of the month, perhaps, but it was a Wednesday in June—he had changed his collar that morning. He wasn't surprised that the star boarder had married the ex-widow. They were always too thick, he thought. Guessed Harrod was glad to have his board money saved for him. Remember! Of course, he recollected everything. And one particular point to which he wished to call the detective's attention was the visit or errand that Harrod had gone for—the then Mrs. Catherwood. Only heard broken sentences like, "Take note—my husband—ask him—return soon;" but *he* knew what it all meant. She had sent the law-student to her husband with a note; that was certain.

No, he didn't know anything more; but he thought they were likely to get "spoony" with each other soon.

He was in his room when he heard the whispered consultation in the entry between the two. He had gone out soon after, and had not returned till late at night—eleven o'clock, perhaps, as he had been in-



dulging in a large lunch. He grieved over the fact that he had lost his regular supper at home that time; but the summer season had lured him away into Central Park, and he couldn't get back to the house in time. Always let himself in with a night-key, and the place was the same as usual that night. Didn't hear about the murder till two or three days later. Nothing unusual about any of the people in the house that he could see, and his long, ape-like arms swung nervously to and fro as he talked.

Hicks regarded him as a queer character,—a sort of food-fiend; but there was no reason for disbelieving any statement he might make. Neither was it a singular matter that Harrod had been sent out to execute this little commission. As for the note, Reuben had that in his possession now. It was given to him by the chief with a few other memoranda, including the handkerchief; and he had hoped strongly that this last-named article would have proved the important clew.

Still pondering, he took from a pocket-book that he pulled out of the table-drawer the crumpled piece of paper, the import of which we know, and smoothed it upon his knee. Some one had crushed it violently in the hand and then thrown it aside. Who? Catherwood, naturally. Reuben lifted the handkerchief, and could still discern a slight perfume upon it. Wonderfully pungent extract it must have been to retain its odor after all these years! That reminded him. Why had he not had that scent analyzed? He would do so, at once. He replaced them in their private compartment, the drawer shutting with a secret lock. Davis never read the papers, unless by acci-



dent. Harrod must have done so; and why did he not come forward immediately and explain his perhaps unimportant connection with the affair, when the press of the city had so thoroughly aired this sensation, and had even commented upon the peculiar significance of the servant girl's expression, "a man with a white set face." Was there a reason? Could it be true that here silence was confession? Damning thought!

He had lately hunted up Davis, who had been in several locations in Harlem and Manhattanville since he was first interviewed, but his address was permanent for a time, and his evidence was ready. Reuben took from his pocket a large pass-book to verify the correctness of that address. He discarded some papers that Sarah had handed to him that morning when he made a call at the Harrod mansion, ostensibly to see the host, whom he knew was not at home. His sister had placed some cakes and wine on the table as he waited. She, too, kept everything under lock and key. Papers! Why, some of them were missing, surely. He fumbled in his other pockets, but the search was unavailing. Some of his memoranda had been lost. Fortunately they were of little value, and he could readily recall their contents; but it was a strange experience to happen to a man so rigidly careful as he had always been. Then he remembered that after he had nibbled at the sweetmeats, and barely touched his lips to the muscatelle, he had dozed for a few minutes. The drowsiness was not strange, because he had had but little rest the night before, while watching at the



Grand Central Depot for a suspect who did not, however, leave the city. He had felt a peculiar numb feeling, too, when Sarah shook him harshly to awaken him from his brief nap—a horrible imprisonment of his own body, similar to the sensation experienced when the foot is "asleep."

*What did it mean?* Could those papers of trifling import have been taken from him then? It was absurd. Sarah was not his enemy. He would question her. *N'importe.*

He looked over his sister's "notes" and a list of possibilities, some of the latter being very far-fetched in his opinion. Mr. Harrod's daily life was an unvarying repetition. Calm, kind and sedate, of habitual tenderness toward his wife. Sometimes he indulged in a mild joke at her fondness for Frangipanni, for the whole house often seemed filled with the bouquet of its fragrance. It had always been her favorite perfume. Mrs. Harrod's habits varied. She visited, drove, received, read and studied—yes, studied books of all kinds with the avidity of a school-girl. While she perused carefully the daily papers, her husband seldom looked at them. His innumerable law-briefs kept him considerably confined in the library late at night. Mrs. Harrod wrote much, and her penmanship was angular or flowing, stilted or beautifully designed, back-hand or regular, according to her moods. It was an extraordinary characteristic. Sarah enclosed specimens of the writing of both husband and wife.

There was another peculiarity about the mistress. For a woman she was very strong. Sarah had seen



her push a heavily laden bureau aside with ease, while she herself had been unable to move it an inch at an attempt made soon after. Nervous people were frequently gifted with great muscular power, however. All this was of but little importance, thought the detective, and most of Sarah's missives were swept into an urn at his side, and upon them he dropped a lighted match. He kept the samples of chirography and compared the writing of the same woman years ago; but that of Mrs. Harrod differed considerably from that of Mrs. Catherwood. Her nature had changed, and naturally, too. But it was tiresome to think more about the subject. There was something more pleasant.

Going to his trunk, he unlocked it and picked out from the side-box a heavy square envelope, bearing a picturesque monogram and exhaling a faint odor of violets. It was a reply to his letter of a few days before, and for the fourth or fifth time he read it carefully with evident delight. Strangely enough, after a brief reference to Sarah and an expression of regret that the sister had not been able to send her the news, there were six closely written pages that seemed only to concern him. Even if his relative was able to use a pen now, this necessitated a response from him, and he hastily dotted down on a stray piece of paper some sentences that he would use in framing the answer he must return to her in a day or two.

"I really believe I'm in love, after all," he said with quiet satire of himself as he rose. Turning to the long pier-mirror, he faced the image reflected



in the glass and spoke in reproachful tones: “Reuben, aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”

But the laughing eyes that looked back quizzically at him conveyed no rebuke in their gaze, and he wheeled away with a half-smile on his face and a new delicious feeling of joy at his heart.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### QUESTIONS OF PROBATE.

"CHIEF, was there a will in the Catherwood case?" asked the detective, as he made his salutation upon entering the main room of the detective bureau the next morning.

"Still harping on that subject, eh?" was the response, for the commander of these legal sleuth hounds had lost some little confidence in the ability of this particular subordinate to ever disclose that mystery of No.—, and was of the opinion that Hicks should reserve his powers or discontinue all allusion to the tragedy until he could bring absolute proof of the detection of the real culprit. But he liked the young man, and Hicks had made a very brilliant record in many other affairs. The chief could not conscientiously refuse or decline to answer a courteous question, although, as he expressed himself, "he was sick of the whole business."

"Yes, there was one. I saw it."

"How did it read, please?"

"Well, I don't exactly remember the provisions, but the daughter was to have \$100,000 at her majority—of course, the mother must support her till then, and after that one-fourth of the dividends arising from his property was to be paid her. When the mother dies, the daughter, her heirs, assigns, etc., as the law phrase goes, is to receive it all.



"Very neat will, the lawyers said. The mother can do what she pleases with what she saves. Good money for both of them. The widow that was ought to have saved a pretty sum herself before the daughter came of age. She had that money we found in the satchel less the \$100,000, the entire use of the dividends for several years, and all of 'the find' from Sampson. By the way, what has become of him? Serving his time, I suppose."

"Yes, sir; but he'll never live till the expiration of his sentence. He is quite low with consumption."

"Ah! Hasn't confessed, I suppose," with an interrogative air, as if he expected an affirmative response. Secretly he believed that Sampson was the genuine criminal, though they had no more proof of it than what the condemned man had acknowledged.

"There is nothing more to confess. I saw him last week. He is quite penitent for his small offence, and seems anxious to aid me, for he feels the imputation resting upon him. He is unable to give me a single clew more than the names of some men both he and Catherwood knew in California. He asserts his innocence of the murder most positively; and I believe him, as I've always done. He was simply a thief by force of circumstances, and his actions now show he has nothing to reveal. I had an interesting account from him of what he heard about Catherwood's first move toward fortune, showing there is truth in the well-worn adage, 'a fool for luck.' Shall I tell it to you?"

The other briskly nodded his head. Hicks always told a story in good style.

"The ex-grocery merchant was sitting upon a pile



of planks one morning in San Francisco, half sleepily thinking of how hard he had worked to make the few dollars he had in his pocket, and wondering what employment he could find that day. It was on Stockton Street, I believe, an unattractive locality in those days, buried in sand at the back of the city. Directly in front of him, standing on a barrel, was an auctioneer, about whom a small crowd had gathered. Two lots of land had just been sold for an ounce, when suddenly without any apparent reason the third one was knocked down for four ounces.

“‘Your name,’ the auctioneer said, shouting at the drowsy man whose head had been nodding.

“‘Jabez.’

“‘Jabez what? Jabez is no name at all.’

“‘Jabez Catherwood,’ replied the other, mystified at this question.

“‘All right,’ was the rejoinder, and the sale went on. The auctioneer, with his eye fixed on Catherwood, knocked down to him successively five or six lots, taking in good faith as a bid each nod of the sleepy man. When the auction had ended, Catherwood was asked to pay for his purchases, but he protested with energy that he had not bought anything. However, as the auctioneer was firm, and the crowd agreed with him, Catherwood was obliged to pay the money. He took from his sack the three or four hundred dollars that were asked—almost his last cent—and, in despair at the ill-luck that seemed to pursue him with relentless spite and make him an Ishmaelite, he struck out for the nearest camp. He worked at mining, and had the usual vicissitudes of the gold-digger, pushing his way into the interior



as one placer after another gave out. About four years from the time he left San Francisco he had managed to save about \$2,000, and considered himself on the road to fortune, when he had the misfortune to fall into a gully, breaking his leg, and was taken to the hospital of Mokelumne Hill.

"After some weeks of suffering, with his pocket-book again sadly depleted, he recovered, and was preparing to leave, when he was accosted by a smartly dressed young man, who had been searching for him. Catherwood was told that one of the largest houses in 'Frisco wanted to ascertain the price of his lots on Stockton Street. He had almost forgotten that he was a real estate owner. His first impulse was to say \$100, but Jabez had a negative sort of business shrewdness, and conjecturing rightly, there must be some considerable value in the sand-heaps when a firm had taken this trouble, began dickering with him. The two finally returned to the city together, and there Catherwood was offered \$10,000 apiece for his lots. Ascertaining that this sum was about their market-price, he closed out the deal, and with the \$60,000 in his possession began speculating carefully. He did well in real estate, and at last made his great 'hit' in the purchase of an abandoned mine for a small sum of money. His practical knowledge of rocks assured him that he had not made a mistake, but he never dreamed of the immense wealth it contained. I see it is rated now as being worth forty million."

"A good yarn," chuckled the chief.

"Yes, and quite as wonderful as other tales I've heard, by which the pauper developed into the full-



fledged millionaire. But to return to our former subject. How did the will come here?"

"I'm under the impression that the old fellow sent it home, some twelve months or so before he came back. It was all right, I know. Of course, he could have had the will probated there, but he claimed this State as his residence."

"Shall I be able to see it?"

"Certainly. Apply to any reputable lawyer, and he will take you into court and secure permission for you to look at it."

Acting upon this advice, Reuben had the will laid open before him two hours later. He saw that its provisions were substantially as stated by his superior officer, and that the attestation clause and signatures seemed properly legal. He made a note of the witnesses' names, noticed that Mrs. Catherwood (now Harrod) had been appointed administrator, as no executor was named (the general statement had been made different from this in the papers), saw the court's ratification of sales and approval of accounts, and after asking a few questions relative to the common proceedings in settling estates, took his departure. His last movement was to hold the will up to the large lighted window in the room, and to note that the paper was made by the "Meriden Paper Company." This item went into his memorandum-book. The water-mark on writing-paper had always been a matter of curiosity to him. The process of this peculiar stamping is known to but a few.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE INTERVIEW.

THE clocks had chimed the hour of two as Reuben Hicks stood before the door of heavy plain oak, bearing a small tin sign, labeled "Private," leading into the inner office of one of the most popular attorneys of the day. In response to his heavy, quick knock, for he could not restrain a slight nervous action, a quiet but decisive voice exclaimed, "Come in," and, turning the knob as he raised his hat, the detective was an instant later in the presence of the Hon. John C. Harrod. And no man, living or dead, had ever, according to general opinion, a better right to that much misapplied term, "Honorable." He sat in a leather-cushioned revolving chair, and had evidently been busily engaged in writing. Half-wheeling about to face his visitor, he waved his hand toward the other, motioning him to be seated as he courteously acknowledged the bow of the visitor by a grave salute.

"Will you allow me, Mr. Harrod?" and the detective, still standing, had put an enamelled bit of paste-board in the other's hand.

"I haven't forgotten you, Mr. Hicks," responded the lawyer, placing the card on the desk; "but to what am I indebted for the honor of this visit?"

"Business and professional, sir."



"To me?"

"No sir, to me."

"Ah! how? I do not understand. But pray be seated," again waving his hand toward a vacant chair.

"I trust there is no danger of our being interrupted, sir," said the detective, as he sat down after a hasty glance at the door, "or of our being overheard," and his eyes roved about the small chamber searching for transoms or openings of any kind.

"Not the slightest. The walls have no ears here," he continued with a slight smile, his benign gaze resting upon Hicks and expressing only a slight shade of amusement at the extra precautions evidenced by the manner of his visitor.

"But it is a very secret affair I wish to confide to you, and I only hope that we may be free from interruption for the next ten minutes."

The lawyer bent toward the speaker with an air of interest.

"That is assured you, Mr. Hicks, as no one will be allowed to make an attempt to enter here until after your departure. That rule of the office is never violated."

"Thank you, sir. First, I would be gratified—greatly obliged, indeed—if you would answer just one question for me."

"It is quite probable I can afford you that pleasure, provided the question is a pertinent one."

"It is, Mr. Harrod, I can assure you. Will you tell me, please, if you were or were not in the room occupied by Jabez Catherwood on East Ninth Street, a short time before his death?"



The lawyer started, moved back in his chair, looked at Hicks keenly, and then stared vacantly at the wall, while he hastily raised his hand to the side of his face and stroked the soft beard nervously. He replied with some slight change of countenance, and with a *hauteur* of voice quite different from his previous pleasant tones, "I am afraid your question is rather impertinent than otherwise."

"It is not intended to be, believe me," responded the other eagerly. "See, sir. That was my business card handed you. Notice it, please. I am one of the city detectives, and I have a right to ask the question, although I'd much rather receive the answer from you as a matter of assent or denial, aside from my professional capacity." The lawyer slowly lifted the card to the level of his eyes and read aloud from its embossed surface:

"Reuben Hicks, Detective, N. Y. P. F."

He passed his hand wearily across his brow once or twice, as if in deep and possibly unpleasant retrospection.

"Before I answer your question, may I ask you why you seek this information from me? Will the knowledge bring harm to any one?"

"I hate to tell you, Mr. Harrod. You may possibly remember that the inquest held at the time of Catherwood's murder developed the fact that one of the 'mysterious callers,' as the newspapers called them, had a white, set face. I have known for some time—not very long, perhaps—that you were the man. Davis, your fellow-boarder at the time, is still living, and is quite willing to testify that the lady who is at present your wife sent you with a note



to Jabez Catherwood, and there is a strong presumption that you delivered the message. At least, the paper was received by him and is now in my possession. It has annoyed me, Mr. Harrod, to think you could not or did not make an explanation of this at the time."

"You are right, Mr. Hicks. It was a grievous mistake. I did not see the newspaper references just then, but it is true that I visited the man who was afterward killed." The detective could not, for the first time in his life of man-hunting, refrain from an exclamation of surprise. He was certain of the fact, and yet he had almost hoped that the lawyer would deny and demonstrate that it was a case of mistaken identity. Really, Davis looked too simple to be used as a witness for or against any one.

Mr. Harrod continued: "I put into his hands a communication from the lady who has since honored me by taking my name. My interview with him was brief and inconsequential. It was my intention to report this incident to the police authorities, and only at the instance of Mrs. Harrod did I refrain from doing so."

"Mrs. Harrod!" ejaculated the detective in accents of wonder.

"Yes, at present. She seemed to be so terribly worried at my having any connection with the tragedy that, at her earnest request, I delayed day after day doing what I've always considered my duty. You can understand all that, however, as well as I. But why have you waited so many years before seeking me to gain the information? Ah, yes, you did not know till some months ago, I remember you said.



I have never bound myself with a promise, and I should have been as ready to answer your question at the time as now; more so, in fact, for I must confess it comes to me just at present as an unpleasant surprise—a reminder of a very distressing episode.”

“Oh, sir, if you had only had done so!” and Hicks’ voice was tremulous.

“Why, what do you mean?” and the lawyer’s expression indicated great wonder. The detective had spoken as if he felt the most infinite pity for him.

This was unaccountable. Most persons would have shown envy at his success and position. It was unpleasant, of course, and he began to have a faint inkling of how much it might be so to him; but why should any one express sympathy for him, as this man’s tones and manner evidently did.

“Can’t you understand, Mr. Harrod? Don’t you see your mistake? It has been a theory of the office, as it would naturally be under the circumstances, that some one of the three visitors who were unknown committed the crime. It’s a theory I held for some years, but I believe I’ve finally discarded it, or I should not have sought you to-day. The woman died innocent, according to her written statement; a man in the penitentiary is now dying, and he, too, is regarded as being free from any active participation in this crime. You are the third and last.”

“Why, fellow, what do your words imply?” and the lawyer, now quite angry, jumped hastily to his feet. The quivering movements of his delicate nostrils indicated the strong resentment actuating him. This sort of talk was incomprehensible.

“Mr. Harrod,” and the detective’s voice was as



sad as that of a woman in distress, "it's the most unpleasant duty of my life. I don't believe it; but can't you, as a legal practitioner, see that you are inculpated? I don't wish to enter into details. Can't you understand the circumstantial and cumulative evidence against you, and that there is every reason to suppose you are the murderer?"

"MURDERER!" came the long-drawn, gasping sigh, with an inflection of horror from the lips of the white, set face which had suddenly grown paler, although there was a look of determination upon the features and a contraction of the mouth that was almost appalling. No wonder that face had made such an impression upon the stupid Irish girl; it would have drawn attention anywhere. It was peculiar and unique, though it displayed only courage, goodness, and moral heroism to those who thought they read aright. It was such an outrageous thing to even breathe a suspicion against him of the slightest wrong-doing that, for an instant, he was tempted to hurl this man to the floor. But as he looked at the detective, there was a revulsion of feeling. In what a gentlemanly manner he had done what perhaps he had been ordered to do! There was no bravado in the appearance of Hicks. Any one suddenly coming upon them would have supposed that the visitor had been detected, full-handed, in some gross misdemeanor, or that he had been summoned there for stern rebuke, the look of humiliation was so strong upon him.

"Sit down, sir," said the lawyer, for the other man too had risen, carried away by the impulses moving them both. "I've been too hasty, perhaps, and I



beg your pardon." He waved his hand gracefully in apology for his scornful words. They sank into their seats with a mutual breath of relief.

"Tell me more about it, Mr. Hicks," and his voice was hard and commanding.

"It is strangely unfortunate that your daughter-in-law has conceived such a violent dislike for you. Yes," he interpolated, as Harrod gave a sudden movement of surprise, and the detective imagined there was a look of aversion on the lawyer's face; "we detectives know everything. I tell you, sir, I have strong faith in your integrity. I want to make it implicit, and would as soon think of accusing myself of this horrible deed. Now, to add to the entanglement, there is a newspaper fellow with rather a shady reputation, as I've learned here in town, who wants to brighten out before the world, and he has grasped the idea that you are the guilty person, basing his supposition upon the motive of your marriage. It has been a painful study to me for years. Even if I had been convinced of your active or passive participation in the affair, I know just what a risk I entertain in bringing the accusation against you, for if it could not be sustained my prospects would be ruined. I should be dismissed from the force and hooted out of the city. If I could prove it, there would be probably sufficient influence exerted to have me removed elsewhere. This has all been very apparent to me; but if I had known beyond doubt that you were guilty, I should have demanded your arrest. I repeat that I'm convinced of the utter impossibility of your being cognizant of this crime, and yet you can see what a chain of evidence there



has been looped about you. Your failure to acknowledge your identity with one of these visitors for whom the police searched, the crumpled note, your step-daughter's unconcealed antagonism, the apparent motive, the ready declarations of such witnesses as Davis and the servant girl, and the strange fact that you were 'listed' as a socialist (a dangerous man) at one time in this city. It's terrible, Mr. Harrod, for I may be forced to place you under arrest at almost any moment."

"There is one effort yet to be made," responded the lawyer, who after the first moments of being astounded was capable of giving the subject quiet thought; "and that is, to find the criminal. It is very gratifying to have you speak of me so kindly. I really did not think men of your profession had such generous susceptibilities, for I had not conceived a very high ideal of the class of detectives whom I've occasionally seen in court, and I'm glad to have my mind disabused. I assure you that, if it becomes necessary to arrest me, I shall never forget the gentlemanly solicitude you have shown in my behalf. I look upon you indeed as a friend. The suspicion even is a disgrace to me, but it seems it can not be helped. I do not believe a just God will allow me to be punished for the sins of others. I knew some sorrow in my early manhood—heart-rending burdens I thought them then—and my heart was rebellious against my fate. It was at that time I made the one false step of my life, to which you refer; but the years have brought me wisdom." And the speaker's face was as calm as a righteous spirit could make a man look. "You will do your duty," he continued,



"whenever it is necessary, but first I wish to make one suggestion; perhaps I will call it a request. There is no danger of my taking flight. That would not only be foolish, but tantamount to a confession of guilt. I know too well that the long arm of the law reaches everywhere. I want you to go to San Francisco."

He turned toward the desk, opened a long, narrow-lidded book, and wrote hastily a few lines. "There, that is a check for \$2,000—sufficient for you to pay the expenses of travel and investigation; sufficient to determine if it be not probable that some old acquaintance of Mr. Catherwood may not be the person for whom you are looking. Front doors are not always locked, and you may find a clew of some one who followed the unfortunate man to this city, gained entrance to his room unseen, and perpetrated the crime."

"I believe that is the right theory, Mr. Harrod, and others have lately come to the same conclusion."

"Which others?"

"I must ask you to excuse me from telling."

"It doesn't matter. Please take this. It is not 'hush-money,' " for the detective made a gesture of dissent, "but part payment of my case in defence and in advance. I would not offer you one cent in my own behalf, in attempting to purchase your silence. Are you willing to do this?" The detective nodded acquiescence as he received the check.

"When you return," and the speaker tugged at his collar as if it was choking him, "and you have not succeeded, I am *here*."

"You will pardon me, Mr. Harrod, for the un-



pleasant necessity that has brought me here. Believe me——”

“Pardon you!” interrupted the other, with hearty grasp of the detective’s hand, as he opened the door to dismiss his visitor. “You have acted the part of a noble friend. Good-by,” and a moment later Hicks was slowly treading the steps of the long stairway. He never used an elevator when he wanted to think. He shook his head dubiously as he mused:

“Strange, that not once did he in direct words declare himself guiltless. Ah! well—I understand one thing. Before he will allow me to arrest him he will kill himself. If he is a villain, he is a great man; and his end will be a fitting one, dramatic as his career. He will never face the scorn of a mob. But I still believe in him,” though in spite of this assertion there was a vague doubt, a species of self-inflicted torture, that he could not put aside.



## CHAPTER XXV.

### FOUND—A WILL.

THE detective had secured means of informing his sister of the trip to California, with the assurance that the affair would be settled within the next two months, and that she should then be free; for she had grown weary of her servitude, as she rightly called it, and wanted to resume her normal position. She claimed that she had fulfilled her mission, and begged relief from her onerous and unpleasant duties.

Early the next morning, as he was about to step into the cab waiting at his front door, a tiny note was placed in his hands by a messenger-boy. "From Sarah," he muttered as he tore the envelope open hastily and read on the paper in her long, thin writing: "Don't forget to look for *his* will in San Francisco."

HIS WILL. The personal pronoun referred to Catherine, but this was the very ecstasy of madness. Why, his will was safely stored in the Surrogate Court of New York City.

"Dear little sis," he thought, in slightly sarcastic mood, "you don't know everything yet; and I'm afraid I'll lose confidence in you if you're not shrewder than this."

But while the discarded envelope fluttered into the gutter, the communication was carefully placed in



his pocket, and barely another remembrance was given it until nearly three weeks later, when he sat in his room at a leading hotel, from the windows of which he could look out upon the waters of the Golden Gate. Though he had not been stimulated by an enthusiastic hope, he was disappointed, for his search had not been fruitful. Catherwood had not formed many acquaintances, it was apparent, and those were wholly indifferent to the man of whom they only recollected that he had for some years been poverty-stricken, until genuine accident threw fortune in his way, and, in the expressive language of one narrator, "put him on his feet." There was no account of any escapade to be learned—nothing that could be assumed as creating for Catherwood a tireless enemy, who tracked him till a direct opportunity was given for revenge or the successful payment of a debt of hatred. Hicks verified the story of the lot-buying, and ascertained that it was for a while a standing joke among the old class of miners who believed Catherwood had been sold, as did other people when he purchased the abandoned mine. But when a rich-bearing quartz was finally located by the geologists and "mining sharps" that the proprietor had put to work as investigators, there was a rush to the vicinage that had never before been equaled, and has only been exceeded since by the noted "Cœur d'Alène stampede,"\* in the winter and spring of 1884. There were no men with bad records that had had any connection with Catherwood, no friend who had

\* Stampede, in the phraseology of the mining regions, is a wild rush for some newly discovered "diggings." The metal, however, must be gold.



“grub-staked” him at some past time, and those in charge of his mining interests were business men of undoubted integrity. Most of them were entire strangers to the original owner, the members of the syndicate being Eastern capitalists, who had purchased on the “say-so” of an expert, and the one or two men who had visited the grounds. Absolutely nothing to connect that tragedy in the metropolis with the past life and associations of the man here. The detective almost groaned in abasement of spirit as he saw no hope to save Harrod from the contamination of an implication with the murder.

Hicks had visited the mine, though the warm enervating climate had slightly affected his health, making him weak and dispirited on the trip; and following a trail through the gloomy solitudes of the wilderness with no company but that of a surly and taciturn guide is not a very enlivening proceeding. He had forded streams, scrambled over rocks, and plunged through mire in reaching the town, which consisted principally of saloons, song-and-dance halls, half-tent, half-shanty, and a big hotel of four rooms, where he experienced the novelty of sleeping, during one night’s stay, upon a bed of which tamarack poles served as springs and pine boughs as mattresses.

• He was surprised to find, among the aggregation of miners, men of superior education and others of some fineness of intellectual fibre, who had discovered a fascination in sleeping on brush, living on bacon, beans, and dried apples, and pawing around in the soil; for adjacent to the Catherwood property was placer-mining, known as “pay-dirt.” The owners



had refused to sell any sites in the locality, as they did not care to develop a mushroom city which would fade away with the same magical celerity it had been built. They negatived any proposition to open up the country, and were satisfied with the railroad facilities offered them at the small way station a mile away, which formed the nucleus of the mining town. For this reason the visitor found the place in almost its primitive state.

He listened to the grotesque tales, the boasting and blarney, and the fantastic oaths of the miners, but was unable to catch an echo of the past relating to Catherwood. Gladly the detective turned his pony's head toward San Francisco. He had gazed with contempt at the scores of hardened women who hung about the camps of the mining districts, but he was amazed and awed at the trackless forest—an entire region covered with such a dense growth of cedar, pine and fir, that he appreciated the witticism of an Irishman who told him, "Begorra, sor, ye'll find the timber growin' as thick as a bunch of matches, sure." It was his first and last view of those trees of surpassing growth, girth, and height, that have truthfully been called "mammoth." But the deadly stillness, even at high noon, beneath this umbrageous canopy was appalling. It was the silence of God's voice.

The morning after his return, he sits idly twirling his thumbs with vacant gaze toward the bay. He can not think of any possible further action. Back to the East, and then—poor Harrod! He will arrange his papers, and taking a collection from the breast-pocket of his coat, held together by a tight rubber



band, he culls them, by tapping each separate one with his forefinger. This one—ah! yes, it was that foolish farewell message from his sister. “Look for the will. Bah!” he ejaculated, rising to his feet.

But it had given him one more idea, and an instant later he was rapidly descending the stairs. Going into the hotel office he soon gleaned from the proprietor the names of the half-dozen lawyers who were engaged in active practice in that city ten and twelve years before. After consulting a directory, he called in rotation upon those whose addresses were still to be found, according to his memoranda, with the simple query if they knew the man or had transacted any business for one Jabez Catherwood, who lived in the city at intervals from about 1863 to 1871. “No,” to both questions, was the unvarying response until he reached the fifth individual, a Mr. Wilfson, when he was surprised to be told that the lawyer’s father, who had been dead about two years, was formerly the counsel and adviser of Mr. Catherwood, and the young man was under the impression there were some papers of importance in his possession left by the father. The son remembered having seen Catherwood more than once, about a dozen years back, and could describe him quite accurately, but had heard nothing from him or of him, and was awaiting advices. Would Mr. Hicks call in the morning, when full information would be vouchsafed him? The detective was only too willing to do so, for he could not deny himself a sensation of wonder. It was a land of novelties, and he was quite willing to be shocked. What would these papers reveal? A trace of the man so badly “wanted,” perhaps.



Reuben visited the sixth lawyer on his list, but that gentleman knew nothing of the information desired—never heard of the name or person. That ended the search. Catherwood had alone confided his business to Wilfson, senior; but, alas! no verbal knowledge could be obtained from that legal luminary. Then wondering if it was possible that Sarah was “cuter” than he had imagined, he went to look up the record of a Catherwood will, but there was none on file. Even if there had been, it would not have furnished a clew, unless some one was mentioned there who might have had a motive in the removal of Catherwood.

Promptly at ten the next morning he was at the office of the lawyer, and was warmly welcomed. The young attorney was sorry there had been such an oversight, but his father evidently knew nothing of the testator's death, and the son had held the papers without careful scrutiny, since he had first taken full charge of the business. He knew nothing of the circumstances. His parent had died suddenly. He repeated: “I am very sorry, Mr. Hicks, for since you state the gentleman has been dead several years it may result unpleasantly to some one; for here in a bundle among a lot of receipts, memorandums and bills, relating to the deceased, I find his will duly attested and signed.”

“*Jabez Catherwood's will!*” almost shrieked the detective. “Are you sure?”

“Perfectly so,” replied the other with a pleasant smile. “Here it is,” placing the document in the hands of Hicks, “witnessed by three gentlemen who are well known to me.”



The detective's first exclamation of incredulity was succeeded by a prolonged whistle. "I beg pardon, sir," he said, as soon as he became aware of the enormity of his offence—for to some ears a whistle is the very incarnation of insolence—"but you will understand how bewildered I am when I tell you that a will of this man, in proper order, has been duly recorded for some years in New York City."

"So? But that's not strange. The majority of men, and most all women, make as many wills as they have inclinations, and with some there are frequent changes."

"True, but this is, I believe, the latest will. 'April 4th, 1873,' " reading the date. "I am positively certain that the will already probated was made a year earlier than this. I know the date is '72."

"The matter must be settled at once, then. I will offer this for probate, with an explanation to the judges of the circumstances and the cause of the delay. The court will then grant you a certificate of record and date, and subsequently the action of the New York court must be nullified. But any attorney there will advise you of the necessary proceedings. I trust I may not be taking a liberty in assuring you that it is expedient you should make haste in this case—'to jump the claim,' as our lingo expresses it. A line will be wired from here indicating the intelligence you bring."

"'Twill make quite a difference to the widow, who has since married, for she has been rolling in clover, and this cuts her down terribly—restricts her to her dower right, I understand," remarked Hicks, who



had been perusing the contents of the document. "Will she be obliged to return what she has already received from the estate?"

"Certainly, if it is demanded of her by process of law. An honest person would make the reimbursement without waiting for legal interference. I should suppose, however, that she and the daughter would adjust the affair amicably. You knew Catherwood, I suppose. I've heard something about him. He was growing convivial in his habits with his increase of wealth. Did he drink himself to death?"

"No: he was murdered, and the criminal has never been caught. It was for the purpose of finding some lost clew that I made this trip."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the lawyer—"an untimely end. You can not leave town for some hours. I should like to hear the story."

Hicks, in a five minutes' talk, gave a brief outline of the mysterious tragedy.

"I can only wish you every success," said the lawyer, rising; "but, although you've made a strange discovery, I do not see that it has helped toward a solution of the problem."

"Neither do I," responded the detective, and then with a courteous salute they parted, each giving the other a hearty clasp of the hands. Their final good-by was said at the depot, where Hicks received the promised certificate. That small, half-printed sheet with a judicial scrawl on it would become a powerful agent in the elucidation of some problems, perhaps. Reuben was overjoyed to think that at last he had found a tangible something, and his late ac-



quaintance smiled as he looked upon the generous fee left him by Hicks.

“And little sis is sharper than I am, after all. Well, I’m not envious. She’s earned her \$2,500, and shall go to Paris just as soon as she pleases,” was his muttered comment as he sank back in the cushioned seat of a parlor car for a six days’ trip across the continent. “What a beautiful world this is—this new, strange California, with its romance and mystery, its wealth and grandeur,” and then in the midst of his rhapsody he yawned.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A MODERN NITOCRIS.\*

UPON his arrival in New York the detective hastened to communicate with the proper authorities, advising them of the facts relative to the invalid paper upon which the administration accounts had long since been passed. The last will differed largely from the other, as it only gave the wife her legal-dower right of the interest of one-third the estate, the remainder to be held in trust for his daughter, less \$200,000 to be paid her at the age of twenty-five, and the one-third to become hers absolutely at the death of the mother, with other provisions in case of the daughter's decease without issue. The court notified Reuben of the receipt of the preliminary telegram, and that orders would be issued for a proper distribution of the property as soon as the Surrogate heard from the San Francisco jurisdiction.

Catherwood had evidently changed his mind regarding his wife during the last years of his life, owing probably to the fascinating qualities of the fair Estelle, as the first will bore date of May 27, 1872.

Hicks then turned his steps toward the home of the Austins, for he considered it an absolute necessity to have an interview with "Miss Nellie," as she was still called by the family, before proceeding far-

\* The Egyptian Cinderella. See Herodotus.



ther. He was also very anxious to see that intelligent sister of his; but he must wait till she could get "a day off," which, he had written to her, must be on the morrow.

To his sore discomfort, he speedily ascertained that Mrs. Austin, who met him dressed in blue silk, wearing pearl ornaments, and who had a mandolin lying by her side, upon which she had been playing—she was evidently preparing to be entertained or to act as hostess—was just as strong in her dislike of her step-father as ever, and with her suspicions as firmly established of his active guilt or complicity in the death of her parent. They had really been united in a bond of confidence and secrecy for some time, though the detective was alone the recipient of all revelations. She even had a new grievance. Her mother had taken seriously to the study of Buddhism, and the daughter believed it was owing to the influence of Mr. Harrod.

"That man has no consistent religious creed, I am sure," she exclaimed vehemently at the beginning of the interview. "If he was in India he would be a Thug, and find specious reasons for indulging in murder. His grave dignity, which I believe is assumed, covers as wicked a heart as a man ever had; don't you think so?" But she was too excited to notice the lack of any response from him to the question. His thought was, "How foolish!"

She continued, inspired by her unseemly spite: "I've heard him talk of 'the Buddha,' as he calls it. Not long ago he spoke in my hearing—I never go to his house now, but my husband is as devoted to him as ever—of *karma*, or moral fate, as being an 'un-



intelligent physical retribution.' I suppose by that he means hanging, which is likely to be his fate. He is leading mother astray with his atheistic ideas, and in search for a religion that will suit his opinions. She's simply a devotee of his greatness. His words are distilled honey to her, and he praises her frequently for this and that characteristic, and especially for her knowledge of law, saying that she knows as much of deeds and conveyances as he does. Poor mother! How she's wrapped up in him! I used to wonder why she would pore over his books, and knit her brows over some law papers of his she would copy, for he writes a horrible hand. I see it all now"—and the speaker stopped to draw a long sigh, in which to rest the pulsations of her throat, for she had been talking rapidly—"it was just to win words of flattery from him. She adores that man, and would inflict pain upon herself if she thought it would please him," and the buxom young matron indulged in a pensive attitude, as if such fidelity was a very rare and withal very pleasant circumstance, and she would be willing even that her dear Edwin should show the same devotion toward her. He was a sensible man, however, who loved her dearly and truly, but was not given to "gush," and considered his actions proved the real affection he felt for his wife.

"Your mother reads considerably, then?"

"Oh, yes; she memorized volumes relating to estates and administration for months. It was a great hobby with her at one time."

"And now——"

"Now, she prates about the 'endless changes of



the metempsychosis,' and dwells with delight upon the details of the life of Gautama Buddha;\* says his story is almost exactly the same as that of the Christ, though he lived some hundred years before the Saviour. She comes here and talks hours on the subject; Writes copious notes, Here are some of the stray pencilings she left with a book the other day. I think it is downright heathenism."

Reuben took the half-dozen strips she handed him. Upon them was written, in widely variant forms of penmanship, such items as these: "The doctrine of 'karma' is that, as soon as a sentient being (man, animal, or angel) dies, a new being is produced in a more or less painful and material state of existence according to the 'karma,' the desert or merit of the being who had died. Fate and karma are not the same . . . First, Buddhism maintains the vacuity, unreality, and illusiveness of nature. Naught is everything and always, and is full of illusion. This very nihilism levels all barriers between castes, nationalities, and even condition of worldly fortune embracing even the vilest worm in the brotherhood of Buddhism. . . . The final object is Moksha, Nirvana, or the deliverance of the soul from all pain and illusion. The endless round of metempsychosis is broken by preventing the soul from being born again. This is attained by purification from even the desire of existence. . . . The Buddhistic metempsychosis is therefore rather a metempsychosis of the soul."

"Isn't it shameful?" she exclaimed as Hicks looked up from reading the slips. "Think what condition

\* Gotama Budha.



my mother's mind must be from the study of such dreadful trash! She talked to me yesterday of 'this deified teacher,' and spoke of the rest and solace a knowledge of the subject had given her. And I gave her a good scolding, too. I wanted to know how she, who had been trained as a strict Methodist, could be seeking these false gods. *Buddhism! Why, I think it's worse than being an infidel!*"

The detective had never noted "fads" as they came into existence, with the sole exception of a weakness for bric-à-brac, and this subject was new to him.

He formed an opinion then, but did not care to express his views. Really, at the present moment, he was more particularly interested in the handwriting of these notes. Still, the discussion of this creed was peculiar, certainly; and so he remarked to the daughter.

"Peculiar?" she ejaculated in hasty repetition of his words; "I should think so! It's more than that; it is downright wickedness, and I don't see how my mother can countenance such an idea. But it's all the result of the influence of that man, I'm certain. He would have her believe that murder is a fine art, if he felt inclined to do so."

And, unaware of how much she had trespassed upon De Quincey's theory, she buried her face in the lace handkerchief she had been holding, overcome by her emotions.

"But you do not know that it was at his suggestion," said the visitor with the inflection of an inquiry.

"No; mother denies that her husband has had any-



thing to do with it. She insists that she took up the examination of the subject from curiosity, and that this belief has brought her consolation, though I can't see what pleasure there will be to think that one's soul may be transmitted to a monkey or any other hideous animal."

She held the popular fallacious opinion, and Reuben in his ignorance could not do otherwise than agree with her, that such a destination for the spiritual element was an uncomfortable disposition or dispensation.

"Are you willing I should retain these slips? I'm interested in them."

"Certainly. Do take them away, for it will be a favor to have them out of the house. I'm afraid, however, they will tend to destroy your moral principle."

"There is no danger, thank you; but if you will allow me," taking a letter from his pocket, "I should like to show you a note I found at the house on my hasty visit there this morning, sent probably, as the postmark indicates, several days ago. The writing is similar to some of these," tapping the Buddhistic items of Mrs. Harrod with the torn envelope.

Her air of gayety and tones of persiflage disappeared as the letter was handed her. This was something more serious than a religious belief formulated on the banks of the Ganges.

"Yes," as she looked at the inscription; "it is mamma's writing."

"Will you please read it?"

She opened the twice-folded sheet carefully, and



after a slight pause murmured half-aloud the words that stood out distinctly on the cream-tinted paper. There was no date.

"If Mr. Hicks feels like traveling abroad in Europe or elsewhere, for a number of years, the sum of \$100,000 will be paid him at once, if he will signify his willingness to do so by addressing, immediately, G. D. F., Box 19,003, City Post Office."

Mrs. Austin stared at the paper with wide-open eyes. For an instant, perhaps, she was stupefied; but her quickness of mental grasp soon gave her the solution.

"I understand." She spoke slowly and coldly. "My mother wants to bribe you and have you leave the country. How did she find out that you suspected *him*?"

"I do not know, madame; but she evidently has an inkling of the facts."

Truly, it was not in the least mystifying to him. It was quite easy to conjecture how the mother had obtained her information. His belief was subsequently verified by a statement from Mr. Harrod. When that gentleman returned home in the evening, after his interview with the detective, at an earlier hour than usual, he had not been able to conceal from his wife a sense of uneasiness. She had watched him carefully and intently, and when some words dropped from his wavering lips upon her listening ears, as he turned wearily in a fitful slumber—disconnected sentences, in which "me," "murder," "arrest" formed a part—she knew that at last her worst



fears were realized. In the early morning, by showing she had some knowledge of the past days' events, she forced from him an account of the statements made by Hicks.

"I will save you, John!" she had cried in mortal anguish, as she hung about him bewailing.

"Don't sorrow so, Marie, dear. It is in God's hands," returning her fond embraces and lifting her from her knees, where she had fallen in the misery of her soul.

And this partly anonymous note, by mail, was the first attempt to carry out her project. She knew of Hicks' absence, but had not been informed when he would return.

There was silence in the room for a few minutes. "Mr. Hicks, I know you are not to be purchased. If you were, I would give you \$150,000 to remain in this city. This matter has lasted long enough. You have not found any clew to any other supposed criminal in your late trip, or you would have told me. [Great presumption on her part, thought Reuben.] You must arrest John C. Harrod."

"It will probably be done toward the end of the week, as there is no possibility of avoiding it, I am sorry to say."

"I'm so glad! 'Sorry to say.' Why are you sorry? Don't you believe in this man's guilt? I do. Yes, and I must tell you something else. There is a Mr. Meeks, who has lately made the acquaintance of my husband somehow, and he is working hard to prove that man guilty also. He is very enthusiastic, and claims to have entire proof. Edwin became



very mad at him, and threatened to horsewhip him, or break his neck, or do some other dreadful thing, I forget which, if he came near the house again."

"Yes, I've heard of him, too," replied Hicks. "A wonderful young man in his own opinion"—("a remarkable ass, in mine," he muttered *sotto voce*)—"but I shall not let this brilliant individual claim all the laurels. I said I was sorry, Mrs. Austin, because it brings sorrow and shame to a man whom I regard with the highest esteem."

"I know, and Edwin talks the same way. I will tell you now, as a family secret, that the only time we have quarreled is when this matter comes up between us for discussion."

Mrs. Austin's speech was a trifle careless when she was excited, and was quite devoid of its usual elegance. At other times, she avoided with precision the introductory "yes," and "well," and "but," which were localistic tendencies of speech, and banishing the "say" and "you know" from her vocabulary as countrified, was seldom guilty of that affected absurdity, "don't you know." Nothing, however, had ever moved her like this. "Edwin says he has implicit faith in Mr. Harrod."

"So have I."

"Very well. Just as you please. That man has fascinated you just as he has my husband. Neither of you seem to take into consideration that my father, harmless and good as he was, was cruelly murdered, stricken down in the prime of life without warning, and yet all that mother and I are—yes, and Mr. Harrod, too, for mother's money helped him at first wonderfully, even if he doesn't need it now—



we owe to my poor father. You know this," she went on in tangled speech, "and yet, because it is past you do not seem to acknowledge that a just punishment awaits this man. My father was nothing to you, but he was everything to me. I could not be false to his memory, to myself, and let the guilty escape. You must arrest Mr. Harrod, and then let him explain if he can. I have so longed for the day to come," and there was exultation in her tones, as she raised her large blue eyes heavenward, though they were swollen with the fast-coming tears. "I am like Nitocris; you have heard of her, Mr. Hicks?"

He signified a slight knowledge of the name by an expressive inclination of his head.

"Well, her husband, Nebi, was grossly murdered (Mrs. Austin had placed herself in a new posture, and sat with the *insouciance* of a school-girl telling a story to her companions, as she continued the recital), and she revenged herself upon the murderers by inviting them to a grand banquet, at the Feast of Inundation, in a great subterranean chamber. When the revelry was at its very height, she turned the flood-gates of the Nile; the waters rushed in upon them, and the assassins were drowned like rats. Then she threw herself upon a heap of smouldering ashes and died. Oh, it was sublime! I am like *her*. I pity mother; but I've been crying for vengeance for years, and to see this man pay the penalty for his misdeeds I am willing to bury us all in a common ruin, if it need be. I know you think I'm bloodthirsty,"—for the detective did not hide the faint symptoms of disgust that were pictured on his face at the utterance of these unworthy sentiments. Nei-



ther was she adapted for the part she had assumed. She looked more like a spoilt child that needed caramels and caresses. Her life would have been *couleur de rose*, but for this phantasmagoria that clouded her brain.

"Edwin says it's a mania with me. You have done your work well," she continued, in a tone of what he considered supercilious commendation, "and you will be generously remunerated——"

"Pardon me, madam. There is no question of compensation, and surely I shall not allow you to tender one cent. Detectives receive a salary, and their work is their duty, if not always their inclination. Perhaps you understand," he added, rather savagely. "You will feel more pity in less than a week from now. I must bid you good-day," and he hastily retired, with but little consideration in his adieux for her.

"Too violent to be womanly," he remarked as he went down the steps from the "stoop." "She has harped on that theory of hers till the strings of her mind only produce a twang, and she will henpeck her husband before he is five years older, if I'm not mistaken. A regular nuisance she is," and he kicked a harmless little pebble on the sidewalk viciously; "but she'll be a changed woman by Saturday night."



## CHAPTER XXVII.

### CAUGHT.

BETWEEN the hours of ten and eleven of the morning of the fifth day after, the door at No — Madison Avenue had been opened and shut several times to admit callers, who came singly and in pairs. Mrs. Harrod's attention was finally called to the almost incessant ringing of the electric gong, and she inquired rather sharply of Sarah, whom she summoned imperiously but with a trace of anxiety in her voice, the cause of this unusual commotion.

She had suffered from a severe headache during the past night, and it was probable she had been worried by the appearance of the new will.

"Gentlemen to see Mr. Harrod," was the quiet reply. Mr. Hicks with a friend was in consultation with the master, now in the library. Three others were in the parlor waiting for an audience. Miss Nellie and her husband were coming soon.

But what did it all mean? Why didn't these men see Mr. Harrod at his office? It was a very irregular proceeding. Her husband was surely not so ill as to be obliged to receive clients at home? He had appeared comparatively well at the breakfast-table. There was a worried look on his face, but he had had that for some weeks past. Sarah would only say in response that it was by the master's orders, at



least, that Mr. Hicks had been admitted to him. They had arranged for the meeting the day before. Part of this she had heard, and the housemaid had told her the rest.

"That detestable man!" Mrs. Harrod cried, with almost a tone of frenzy in her voice. "He knows perfectly well that his presence here is not desired. By the way," and she stared at the girl steadily, "I never noticed it before, but I believe you bear a resemblance to him. You are not a relative, surely?"

"How can that be, ma'am?" and the young woman smiled humbly, thinking how acute the senses of her mistress must be that morning.

"No matter," returned the other. "Will you please try to get these people out of the house as soon as possible, and then tell Mr. Harrod I am anxious to see him?"

"Anxious, ma'am?"

"Yes, I said so," and she responded with a show of acerbity quite unusual to her; "but you needn't repeat my words to me. I don't want a parrot. I can't bear to be worried with the presence of strangers in the house, and—and I don't understand their business here. Go!"

Mrs. Harrod had pressed her hand to her side while speaking, as if dreading an attack of heart-complaint. Her face was ghastly white, and the pupils of her eyes were dilated with a fierce light that indicated some great mental agitation. An outsider would have said that the woman was terribly frightened. Sarah, who had grown accustomed to the steadily increasing nervousness the elder woman had displayed for the past few months, did not ap-



parently notice the tremulous dismay depicted in the startled face and shaking form of Mrs. Harrod.

"Yes, ma'am; I will take the message to him."

The mistress heard the footsteps of the girl as she went down the stairs, counted the falling of the feet, though she was stricken with mortal agony. No reply had been received from the note offering the large sum of money for Hicks' departure. A messenger had been sent to that post-office box nearly every hour for the past two weeks. Why was the man here? He must have understood. Did he think she would be unable to pay him that amount now? He was mistaken, then, for she had much more than that all her own. Had he come to her husband to ask for a larger sum, or was he not mercenary enough to have his silence bought? Was her dear, noble John to be arrested this day? What a horror surrounded her! She felt as if she should go mad. If John was only dead, and she was dead! They would be resting peacefully together then.

Again the footsteps. She stood for an instant in expectant dread. Then the door was thrown open and her daughter rushed into the room.

"Poor mother!" she exclaimed, throwing her arms about the other's neck. "How pale you look!" viewing the distracted woman, and wondering, as she selfishly mused, if it was possible that the other knew what was to happen; but no, that was impossible. Her mother could not have been told of Harrod's intended arrest.

"You will have me always, dear mother, with you now. I have never forgotten the love you showed me——"



"Have *you*, Helen? *What* do you mean?" interrupted the elder woman, almost tearing away the arms that encircled her. Just then, at least, she was not craving for a show of affection from her child. "What does all this mean, Helen?" she cried, in an exasperated tone; for she was having a very bad quarter of an hour, and her nerves were completely upset. "*These men in the house. Tell me——*" But there came a quiet rap at the door that silenced the voice that was raised in hysterical accents. A gloomy, drizzling rain had just begun falling, and the drops were streaking the window-panes. Lowering clouds added to the funereal pall that covered all things, and even the daughter's heart sank as she thought of the more dismal scene that awaited them below.

"Mr. Harrod would be pleased to see you in the library," remarked Sarah, as she stood in the open doorway, and her tones were smooth and gentle, although there was much speculation in her eyes—no vulgar curiosity, but an expressive look, as if she could see beyond the commonplace present.

"Yes, come, mother. Edwin is down there, too," and pulling and partly pushing at the other's arm, she hastened Mrs. Harrod's progress down the stairs.

"Please explain," gasped the poor woman, as she was hurried along; "is it a surprise-party of some kind?"

"I'm afraid so," and the daughter bit her lips when she replied.

As the two entered, the husband, son-in-law, the detective and his companion rose and greeted them with respectful obeisance.

"What *does* it mean, John?" and she ran to his



side, placing her arm around him with protecting and affectionate clasp, utterly oblivious of those present. "I'm so worried. Do tell me!"

"This gentleman will tell you," indicating Hicks with a motion of his hand. "Be calm," and he pressed her arm reassuringly.

"I regret, madame, to be obliged to exercise this painful duty, but——"

"Please tell me at once what *you* mean!" she cried imperiously, her eyes blazing, and for the once displaying the intense hate she felt for the detective.

"This will tell you—they came first," was his ungrammatical response, and he pushed aside the folding-door, when Meeks, with a mirthful, sardonic smirk—never had he a sense of the eternal fitness of things—entered, followed by two members of the police force.

What a grand moment it was for the little Fadla-deen! Intensely dramatic, really; and now, with his perfectly arranged *cul de sac* that he had been so many months in perfecting, he was to taste the sweets of a conquering hero. In some manner he too had found Davis, and had induced that individual to make more incriminating statements than had been given to the detective; for the food-hunter had drawn upon his imagination, finding that Harrod had so many ostensible enemies, and he was quite willing to stretch the truth if it would work injury to his quondam fellow-boarder.

He still bewailed the loss of those special delicacies. He would be a great card for the prosecution.

Meeks, with the assumption that the eyes of the



world were upon him, made two elaborate bows, first to the ladies, and then fixed upon a position, very striking he was sure, with feet placed a trifle farther apart than usual and much more than was necessary, though it may have been for the purpose of maintaining a rather unstable equilibrium. His left pigeon foot, resting upon the toes, rather detracted from the grace of his studied *pose*. Raising his eyes with affected contortions of the muscles, and clearing his throat, he began with grandiloquent and bombastic tone: "Ladies and gentlemen." There was another bow that reminded one of the erratic movements of a large stone knocked off a post as it pirouetted to the ground, and an additional grin of self-contained delight. Men from his section were always polite to the gentler sex, rumor stated, although the facts do not substantiate the popular theory, and he must maintain that reputation. He glossed over his actual nervous condition by what he supposed was a Chesterfieldian salute, and was quaking with doubt of his ability to successfully maintain his part of chief actor.

"It *is* my painful duty, as a newspaper attaché, to have been the humble means [how he did roll that word 'humble' on his tongue, trippingly, but with such humility of tone and look] of bringing a guilty man to justice." Ah! what visions of fame ran riot over his soul! It was a moment of supreme ecstasy to him.

"Years have passed since the horrors of a dastardly murder were borne to our receptive ears." Was that word "receptive" a proper one? As he gave it an instant's consideration Mrs. Austin murmured, in an



aside that was painfully distinguishable, "How tiresome!"

But Meeks continued: "My attention was called to this mystery but a short time ago. I believed it was not so strange, so incomprehensible a crime as some would have desired us to assume." Here he looked straight at Hicks with a malicious smile. "I will not worry you with details, but I have labored earnestly, have found the clues, tied them together, and the complete proof is now in my hands. Naturally, I have been obliged to seek the assistance or co-operation of the law, and through them the uplifting of the veil—that is, the—the—[alas! his intellect had suddenly contracted, and his ideas were gone]. Officers, do your duty," and he stepped back with a stride and a melodramatic gesture. The command was given in a very stagey tone. He had a brief suspicion that his peroration should have been more rounded and finished in more complete and rhetorical style; but he had done his best. *In toto*, he believed it was a success, and consequently he still essayed an air of superior knowledge. The elder of the policeman walked up to the lawyer, who had been looking on the proceedings with no sign of more than cursory interest. It was a farce played by small characters. His gaze fell sternly upon the man. "Well?" was his quiet inquiry.

Fluttering a paper, the blue-coated retriever, in good imitation of Meeks' pyrotechnical display, spoke: "I arrest you, John C. Harrod, for the wilful murder of Jabez Catherwood," his hand falling upon the lawyer's shoulder in theatrical conclusion.

Mrs. Harrod stood for a moment as if stricken with



palsy, her breath coming thick and fast, the blood receding from her face till it was as colorless as chalk, and then taking the extended hand of her daughter, allowed herself to be led toward the door. She could not bear to look at her husband just yet. What cruel injustice! What dishonor to place upon him! But she would save him, *coûte qu'il coûte*—let it cost what it may.

“My God! what shall I do?” was the cry of the despairing woman as she reached the threshold. The detective was at her elbow.

“Confess, madam,” was his response, breathing his words into her ear with a harshness that evinced the exasperation he felt toward her who had beguiled him for many a long year with her affected sweetness and plaintive address—whose still ladylike demeanor covered a heart that must have beat at times with all the ferocity of the tiger. He was mad in thinking of his wasted efforts, of his senseless journeyings to and fro, and that only a sister’s keen insight had, *au dernière*, made plain the truth.

“What do you mean, sir?” she cried, looking at him with glaring eyes, though her shoulders drooped and her form was shaking.

“That *you* are the guilty one. Oh! I’ve found you out! I have the note you sent to your late husband by Mr. Harrod,” flourishing a written bit of paper, old and torn, before her eyes. “The penmanship is singularly like that of the forged will you made—doubly so, for the paper on which you wrote was never made till many months after the date of the will. The Meriden Paper Company did not come into existence till 1873. You drugged me with



curare put in the wine set for me in this house, but the papers you stole from me did not benefit you. I've every evidence against you. More than all, here is your handkerchief, that was picked up in Jabez Catherwood's room, scented with your favorite Frangipanni!" and the linen tissue was waved before her startled gaze. "Why do you weep so at night when you are alone? I know your innermost life. Come, tell the truth! It is useless to deny."

He had spoken in a low tone, while the rest were waiting, wondering.

She turned with a dramatic action that Meeks would have given a week's salary to have been able to copy, tearing herself away from her daughter's grasp—an easy matter now, for that young lady was completely stunned. *Her mother accused of this murder!*

Throwing back her shoulders, and with the step of a queen, Mrs. Harrod advanced toward the police and his prisoner. "Unhand him, fellow!" was the command hurled at the roundsman, with an upward motion of her arm and a glance that burnt into the memories of them all. "HE IS INNOCENT! I KILLED JABEZ CATHERWOOD. I hated him! He had treated me with shame, and he brought back a woman who was to receive his showers of gold. I went to his room, gaining admittance through the open door of the house without being seen. He thought it was his light-o'-love when I was coming into the room, and then when I pleaded for justice toward myself and child, he scorned me—told me that I must be divorced from him—that I was in his way! He swore at me. He caught up his dagger as if to



threaten me; and when, in my fury, I wrestled with him, by accident I stabbed him. The law would say it was justifiable homicide, but I make no such plea. I'M GLAD I DID IT!"

She had spoken hurriedly, in frantic expression—the usual cold, impassioned manner gone forever. Her quailing attitude had departed as she stood in the centre of the room wildly gesticulating, her voice shrill and distinct, almost defiant. Her words were indelible. They inspired terror. Every listener to them was strangely affected, but Meeks quaked in his boots. Then for an instant there was a softening of the lurid light that gleamed in her eyes, and a falling of the voice as she raised her face to her husband.

"Do not think I am a bad woman, John. It was not intended; but when it was done I dreaded to tell it, lest I should lose you and your love. It has been a ghastly secret to me. You were so patient and hard-working, and I wanted to help you, as I did. You had all my heart. You won't turn from me, dear husband. You will forgive me, if the rest of the world condemns—won't you?"

She was almost crying, and he looked hard and stern. Never had there come to him a glimmering of this terrible truth. What horrible dishonor! He spoke to the detective tersely. It was the sublimity of heroism.

"My wife is only trying to save me. You must not pay any attention to her statements. *I* am guilty of the crime."

"No, you're not, dear John! Some of them know better," and a pair of soft, rounded arms, that still



retained the plump freshness of youth, were thrown about his neck, and warm lips touched his cheek. There was the caress of a farewell in the loving endearments she showered upon him, but he remained impassive.

"It was all for your sake! Forgive me! Good-by."

Her hands dropped away from him. His unrelenting manner was breaking her heart. There was a hasty movement as she lifted a vial to her mouth. A shuddering motion of the body; a deathly paleness rapidly overspreading the face; and she sank upon the floor.

"It was all for you, John," were her dying words. Then, with a shriek of peculiar horror and a writhing of the limbs, she rolled over upon the carpet.

"Hydrocyanic—prussic acid," was the comment of Hicks, as he bent over the prostrate form. It was too late for antidotes. Prussian blue was useless. Even that last resort of bleeding from the jugular vein would be unavailing. This was death.

"Your intended sacrifice was unnecessary," he whispered to Mr. Harrod, who stood momentarily bowed with agonized grief, and then sank upon his knees by the side of the woman who had loved him so well, giving her the kiss of forgiveness, but too late to bring consolation to the weary, heavy-burdened soul.

There was deathly silence, only broken by the sound of a closing door, as Meeks, paralyzed with fear, had actually crawled away from the scene.

"What a wretch I've been!" sobbed Mrs. Austin, as she threw herself into her husband's arms. "How I have persecuted that good man! Will Mr.



Harrod ever forgive me? Poor, poor mamma!" glancing with a shudder at the inanimate form.

In opposite corners of the room, Reuben and Sarah stood, looking at each other with inscrutable eyes, victims almost of remorse—at least conscious of mingled regret that they had been made agents in executing the decrees of that strange but inexorable law of destiny.

Presently there was a quiet movement of all toward the hallway: subdued footfalls could be heard passing out of the house; and soon the bereaved man was left alone, sorrowing with his beloved dead.

. . . . .

Three days later, Sampson laid down the burden of life behind the prison-walls, but he knew before the end that he was free from all suspicion. That knowledge left a smile upon the thin, worn face.

THE END.



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
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